

God Hidden and Revealed in Luther and Calvin

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DECLARATION

This dissertation is in fulfillment of the requirements established by the University of Edinburgh, for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, in the School of Divinity. I declare that this thesis is my own composition and constitutes the results of my own research.

Jung Woo Shin

15 June 2005

DEDICATED

to

My beloved teacher, Rev. Prof. Sou-Young Lee, and
His Most Gracious Saemoonan Church
for their support and encouragement
and above all
for their love

ABSTRACT

The main purpose of my thesis is a comparative study of the theme 'God hidden and revealed' in Luther and Calvin, with a focus on the relation between the hidden God and the revealed God.

One of the serious issues debated in theological scholarship is the relation between the hidden God and revealed God. Some say the relation is antithetical, arguing from the apparently dualistic and irreconcilable aspects such as the arbitrariness of God and God as love. Some say that it is identical, seeing that in a single event of revelation, the eye of faith discerns the *Deus revelatus*, where sense-perception can only find the *Deus absconditus*. While there have been many diverse critical views surrounding the issue of Luther's God hidden and revealed, not much attention has been given to Calvin's doctrine of the hiddenness of God. Nor has a comparison been made of the relation between the hidden God and revealed God in Luther and Calvin in modern theological debate.

In this thesis, Luther's concept of the hidden God is put on the matrix of his central theme of theology of the cross, a theme which runs through his whole theology. Luther's hidden God in the theology of the cross is characterized as the God wearing the mask, who works *abscondita sub contrariis* in relation to his creature.

Compared to Luther, however, this thesis shows that the concept of *Deus absconditus* is not only as native to Calvin's theology as it is to Luther's, but also parallels Luther's in large parts. If the mask is the trademark of Luther's hidden God, the idea of 'accommodation' can be Calvin's trademark. The accommodating God speaks to us like a mother babbles to her child, in baby talk. As Luther's God hides himself in masks to reveal himself, Calvin's God accommodates himself to our human weakness and sinfulness to reveal himself.

Luther's ideas are deeply rooted in paradox. Much more so than Calvin, Luther describes so sheer and serious a contradiction between God hidden and revealed as to threaten the unity of God. At the same time, Luther never loses his strong view of unity of God. Luther's view is 'unity in contradiction' in God hidden and revealed. The apparently irreconcilable unity and contradiction in God hidden and revealed can be harmonized and understood only in *Divine paradox*, which tells us that contradiction is just in the human eye, not in God's eye.

While Luther is happier to live with ideas in a paradoxical tension, Calvin is more enthusiastic to prove the unity of God, concentrating on shattering the idea of all contradictory elements such as two different wills, driving the paradox into the theological frame of his understanding of God. Calvin's conclusion is that God's will is one and simple in spite of its diverse appearance to our perception.

Luther and Calvin both affirm that, though the hidden God and the revealed God seem to be irreconcilable from the perspective of our limited reason, this is not so in God's sight. Both emphasise that the hidden God of predestination is none other than the God revealed in Christ, who approaches us with love and mercy. They stand on the firm ground of Christological principle, where they find God's unity. Both insist that the best way to the hidden God of predestination is to grab the revealed God in Christ. Both accept with humility that the mystery of God must be the final source of understanding of God hidden and revealed. Both use their doctrine of the hidden God as a vehicle to praise the greatness of God.

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Most of all, I am grateful to my Father in heaven who is always with me, helping and inspiring me to accomplish this thesis with his wisdom, love, and grace.

I came to have an interest in the topic of God hidden and revealed in Luther and Calvin through Professor Daniel Migliore's class 'Doctrine of God' at Princeton Theological Seminary in 2000, which began its first lecture with 'God Hidden and Revealed'. Here Dr. Migliore dealt with Luther, Calvin, Karl Barth, Vladimir Lossky, Karl Rahner, and Gutierrez on the hiddenness of God. At New College, Edinburgh, Prof. David Fergusson and Prof. David Wright decisively advised me to choose this topic.

In particular, I want to reveal that my thesis is absolutely indebted to my 'always good' teacher, Professor Sou-young Lee, and his most gracious Saemoonan Church that not only financially, but also spiritually helped and encouraged me. Whether I am in sunshine or under cloud, my beloved teacher Professor Lee was with me, consoling and encouraging me. Therefore, I am glad to dedicate my thesis to him and Saemoonan Church, especially with thanks to their scholarships over four years to undertake this dissertation.

I am grateful to Prof. Fergusson and Prof. David Wright, who supervised me with the boundless hospitality and a warm care and concern. Now I want to express my sincere respect and deep thanks for them. Above all, I cannot forget my supervisor, Dr. Susan Hardman Moore, the priceless treasure at New College of Edinburgh University. She has been always so good to me. Her scintillating comments and warm and kind care were impressive. Sometime she approached me with a motherly love, sometimes as a good friend, sometimes as a good teacher, and sometimes as a wonderful advisor. I believe that without her help and care this thesis would not have been completed. I confess that her academic and personal quality in supervision was 'always more' and 'couldn't be better'.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Declaration	i
Dedication	ii
Abstract	iii
Acknowledgements	v
Table of Contents	vi
Abbreviation	x
Introduction	xi

Part A. Hiddenness I in Luther and Calvin 1

Introduction	1
---------------------	---

Chapter I. Hiddenness I in Luther: God in the Mask 2

1. Why does God hide?	3
2. The Development of the Hidden God in Luther's Theology and His Work	5
3. The Masks of God	22
4. How the Hidden God Works in the Mask: <i>Abscondita sub Contrariis</i>	28
5. Hiding to Reveal: The Nature of the Mask and Its Function	32
6. How the Hidden God Exists in the Mask	40

Chapter II. Hiddenness I in Calvin: God in Accommodation 46

1. Why does God Accommodate Himself?	47
2. What is the Human <i>Captus</i> Considered in Accommodation?	52
3. Calvin's Theological Employment of Accommodation	58
4. The Modes of Accommodation	76

5. The Divine Strategy for Accommodation	81
6. The Function of Calvin's Idea of Modes of Accommodation	85
7. How the Hidden God Exists in the Modes of Accommodation	88
8. Accommodation and the Idol	94
Conclusion of Part A: Comparison of Hiddenness I in Luther and Calvin	101
Part B. Hiddenness II in Luther and Calvin	123
Introduction	123
Chapter III. Hiddenness II in Luther: God beyond Revelation	126
1. God as the "Naked and Absolute" God	127
2. God as a Remodelled <i>Potentia Absoluta</i>	129
3. God of Predestination	134
4. God of Freedom	137
5. The <i>Mysterium Tremendum</i> : The Awesome and the Fascinating	140
Chapter IV. Hiddenness II in Calvin: God beyond Accommodation	147
1. God as the "Naked and Absolute" God	148
2. God as a Remodelled <i>Potentia Absoluta</i>	149
3. God of Predestination	151
4. God of Freedom	156
5. God of Abyss and Labyrinth	158
Conclusion of Part B: Comparison of Hiddenness II in Luther and Calvin	163

Part C. The Relation between God Hidden and Revealed in Luther and Calvin 178

Introduction 178

Chapter V. The Relation between God Hidden and Revealed in Luther 182

1. Two Streams of Scholastic Views on the Relation of God Hidden and Revealed 184
2. Hiddenness I and Hiddenness II 187
3. The Relation between the Hidden God and the Revealed God 192
 - a. “Identical” in Hiddenness I 193
 - b. ‘Unity in Contradiction’: A *Divine Paradox* in Hiddenness II 195
4. God’s Love and Wrath in God Hidden and Revealed 211
5. The Double Structure of Law and Gospel in God Hidden and Revealed 222
6. A Harmonious Dual Image of a God of Love and a God of Predestination 226
7. The Relation between the Holy Spirit and the Hidden God 235
8. The Hidden God and Our Knowledge of God 239
 - a. Knowledge of God Hidden and Revealed 239
 - b. The Hidden God and Our Faith 243
 - c. Three Kinds of Light 253

Chapter VI. The Relation between God Hidden and Revealed in Calvin 257

1. Hiddenness I and Hiddenness II 259
2. The Accommodated God and God Himself 261
 - a. Continuity in Discontinuity 262
 - b. Pursuing Unity by Shattering Contradictions: Unity in Contradiction 267
 - 1) Against ‘Capricious God *ex Lex*’ in *Potentia Absoluta* 268
 - 2) Against ‘God with Two Different Wills’ 274

3) Against ‘God Who Changes His Will’	284
4) Against ‘God as the Author of Evil’	287
5) Against ‘God as an Unjust and Unreliable Judge’	295
3. Christ as God’s Unity	302
4. A Harmonious Dual Image of a God of Predestination and a God of Love	309
5. The Position and Role of the Holy Spirit in God Hidden and Revealed	315
6. The Hidden God and Our Knowledge of God	322
a. Knowledge of God Hidden and Revealed	322
b. The Hidden God and Our Faith	327
c. Gradation of Revelation	331
Conclusion of Part C: Comparison of the Relation between God Hidden and Revealed in Luther and Calvin	335
Conclusion	355
A. Summary	355
B. Evaluation	377
1. Not at the Periphery, but a Sound and Substantial Theology	377
2. Positive through Negative	380
3. Theology Extolling the Greatness of God	383
4. Theology of Eschatological Hope	385
Bibliography	390

ABBREVIATIONS

- CO* *Johannis Calvini Opera Quae Supersunt Omnia*, eds. Wilhelm Baum, Edward Cunitz, and Edward Reutz, P. Lobstein, 59 vols. *Corpus Reformatorum* (CR) 29-98 (Brunswick and Berlin: C.A. Schweiske, 1863-1900)
- Comm* mainly refers to the edition of the Calvin Translation Society (*Calvin's Commentaries*, various trans. 22 vols. Edinburgh: Calvin Trans Society (CTS), 1843-56; reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979)
- CR* *Corpus Reformatorum. Philippi Melanthonis Opera Quae Supersunt Omnia*, ed. C.G. Betschneider and H.E. Bindseil. (Braunschweig and Halle: Schwetschke, 1834-60)
- Inst* John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles and others, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), which is a translation of the 1536 *Institutio*.
- LW* Martin. *Luther's Works*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehmann (St. Louis: Concordia, and Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1955)
- OS* *Ioannis Calvini Opera Selecta*, ed. Peter Barth and Wilhelm Niesel, 5 vols, (Munich: Kaiser, 1928)
- Sermons* *Sermons of Martin Luther*, ed. John Nicholas Lenker, 8 Vols. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker House, 1988)
- WA* *D. Martin Luthers Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe. Weimarer Ausgabe*. (Weimar: Hermann Bohlau, 1883)

Introduction

In the world of suffering, torment, and travail, God is typically represented as the one who works in a way to disclose himself in the Cross of Christ. People ignored, marginalized, and oppressed get some consolation in the God who disclosed himself in weakness, suffering, ultimately on the Cross. In history, the painful experience after the horror of Auschwitz and Hiroshima drove the concern of scholars into the center of Christian faith, Christ crucified and risen in whom we find our salvation, our life and our resurrection. This is the apex of Christian faith, which all the other Christian truths come from.¹

David Tracy understands that God comes to the liberating forms of contemporary theology as the hidden and revealed God of empowering hope revealed in the Cross, in the memory of the suffering and the struggle by, for, and with “others”: especially the forgotten and marginal ones of history. In his description, God sometimes comes as “an even deeper Hiddenness—the awesome power, the terror, the hope beyond hopelessness often experienced in the struggle for liberation itself”.² In particular, he finds this deeper Hiddenness in Gustavo Gutierrez’s profound later reflections on the hidden and revealed God as Life, and in Elizabeth Johnson’s naming of God as “She Who Is”.³

As Dillenberger puts it, prior to Luther, there were concepts of the hiddenness of God, frequently implied in the concept of revelation. He enumerates several cases in the sermons of St. Chrysostom, Clement’s *Stromata*, and Origen’s *De Principiis*. He regards Augustine’s writings as abundant in references to the term, and its meaning is elaborated in a distinctly different form in mystical thought from Dionysius the Areopagite through Tauler. However, as

¹ Vatican II, *Unitatis Redintegratio*, §11. Among the famous publications which attracted attention to the theology of the Cross, there are Kazof Kitamori’s *The Theology of the Pain of God* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1965), Jüngel Moltmann’s *The Crucified God* (London: S.C.M. Press, 1974), and J. Feiner and M. Löhrer’s *Mysterium Salutis* (Einsiedeln: Benziger, 1969).

² David Tracy, “The Hidden God: The Divine Other of Liberation”, *Cross Currents* 4 (Spring, 1996): 8.

he concludes, nowhere better than in Luther can we find “a greater concern with the concept and its integral relation to the nature of revelation”.⁴

Luther’s contribution begins with his elaborate distinction between God hidden and revealed. Lohse praises Luther for his distinction between the *Deus absconditus* and the *Deus revelatus*: “The distinction between the *Deus absconditus* and the *Deus revelatus* may be Luther’s most important contribution to the tradition of the Christian doctrine of God.”⁵ Luther observes, citing Isaiah 45:15, “Truly you are a hidden God.” In the *First Lectures on the Psalms* 13:18 (the *Dictata* of 1513-15), we find Luther’s significant fivefold application for the expression of God’s hiding place, “God hides in the darkness of faith, in light inaccessible, in the mystery of the Incarnation, in the blessed Virgin, and in the Eucharist.” This is the budding form of Luther’s hiddenness which is ready to spread out. From the *First Lectures on the Psalms* onward, the idea of the hidden and revealed God became a central theme in Luther’s writings.

Luther’s crucified and hidden God has an inseparable relation with his theology of the Cross. The crucified and hidden God can be understood best in the context of theology of the Cross. The concept of hidden God is a central theme running through his theological scheme of “*theologia crucis*”. The crucified God is the God who is hidden in his revelation. He is the God who makes us so humble as to receive his justifying grace flowing down from the Cross. The *Deus theologicus* is the *Deus crucifixus* and *absconditus*.⁶

What has attracted my attention is the relation between God hidden and revealed. For Luther, this relation seems to have a myriad of facets. It is one of the serious issues debated by commentators on Luther. They may be divided into two groups for this: for the first group, the

³ Ibid.

⁴ John Dillenberger, *God Hidden and Revealed: the Interpretation of Luther’s Deus Absconditus and Its Significance for Religious Thought* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1953), xvii.

⁵ Bernhard Lohse, *Martin Luther’s Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 217.

⁶ Gerhard Ebeling, *Luther: An Introduction to His Thought*, trans. R.A. Wilson (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1970), 227.

relation is *identical* (e.g. Ferdinand Kattenbusch, Karl Holl, Hellmut Bandt, and Erich Seeberg) and for the second, it is *antithetical* or contradictory (e.g. Otto Ritschl, Albrecht Ritschl, Adolf Harnack, Karl Barth, Brunner, Friedlich Loofs, B. A. Gerrish, Alister McGrath, Paul Althaus, and Gerhard O. Forde).⁷ David Tracy is exceptional, because he follows a third line. First of all, he, following Gerrish, criticizes any interpreters who either try to harmonize Luther's two different senses of God's ambivalent hiddenness or simply try to dismiss Hiddenness II as somehow unimportant or wrong. Instead, David Tracey chooses the third view that two senses of God's hiddenness in Luther are best read as distinct "religious experiences" in the Christian religious genius.⁸

To cut through many kinds of interpretations and ideas to approach Luther's understanding of the right relation between the hidden God and revealed God, I adopt Gerrish's framework of Hiddenness I and Hiddenness II along with a *Divine paradox*, which will be discussed later.⁹ McGrath states that Luther employs the term *Deus absconditus* in several different ways, and contemporary Luther scholars cannot reach a general consensus on the various senses.¹⁰ However, recently, Gerrish's distinction between Hiddenness I and Hiddenness II has attracted scholars' attention. Gerrish refers to 'hiddenness in revelation' as Hiddenness I and 'hiddenness beyond revelation' as Hiddenness II. I think that the terms Hiddenness I (hidden in revelation) and Hiddenness II (hiddenness beyond revelation) invented by Gerrish are convenient and useful because they can explain some ambiguous complexities and elucidate Luther's hidden God theory. These terms are not new. Some scholars already knew the distinction between the hiddenness of God in revelation and beyond revelation, without explicitly using these special terms. For example, Ferdinand

⁷ For a more detailed discussion, see the below Chapter V.1. "Two Streams of Scholastic View on the Relation of God Hidden and Revealed"; Chapter V.3. "The Relation between the Hidden God and the Revealed God."

⁸ Tracy, "The Hidden God: The Divine Other of Liberation", 12.

⁹ See the below Chapter V.3.b. "'Unity in Contradiction': A *Divine Paradox* in Hiddenness II". Cf. Gerrish, "To the Unknown God: Luther and Calvin on the Hiddenness of God", in *The Old Protestantism and the New* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 134.

¹⁰ Alister, E. McGrath, *Luther's Theology of the Cross* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985), 164.

Kattenbusch used a concept equivalent to Hiddenness I in his statement, “God hides himself in his revelation, so that revelation and hiddenness are not opposed, but coincide.”¹¹ On the other hand, Emil Brunner introduced not only the *Deus velatus* as equivalent to Hiddenness I,¹² but also the hiddenness beyond revelation (Hiddenness II), by saying that the hidden God can be other than the one revealed in Christ.¹³ More than anyone else, I understand that B. A. Gerrish was indebted to John Dillenberger for the idea. In his work, *God Hidden and Revealed: the Interpretation of Luther’s Deus Absconditus and Its Significance for Religious Thought* (1953), Dillenberger, clearly divides the hiddenness in Luther into “hiddenness in revelation” and “hiddenness beyond revelation”.¹⁴ However, B. A. Gerrish freshly coined the terms of Hiddenness I and Hiddenness II, which have become favorite terms of many scholars such as Alister McGrath, David Tracy and Daniel Migliore.¹⁵

Compared to Luther, not much attention has been given to Calvin’s doctrine of hiddenness of God. Furthermore, it is very difficult even to find an article or a thesis dealing with the comparative study of the hidden God in these two theological giants. It is all the more surprising considering the theological significance that the doctrine of the hidden God takes up in Calvin’s theology. Therefore, Gerrish indicates, “Surprisingly, however, there is no

¹¹ F. Kattenbusch, ‘*Deus absconditus bei Luther*’ in *Festgabe für D. Dr. Julius Kaftan zu seinem 70. Geburtstag* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1920), 170-214: especially, for the correlation of revelation and hiddenness, see 181-3.

¹² Emil Brunner, *The Christian Doctrine of God, Dogmatics*, vol. I (London: Lowe and Brydone, 1962), 172. For Brunner, the *Deus velatus* is the *Deus revelatus*. The form of the *velatio* is precisely the possibility of the *revelatio*. This concept is similar to Luther’s Hiddenness I. On the other hand, Brunner understands that the *Deus absconditus* refers to the *Deus absolutus*.

¹³ Ibid., 232. Here, Brunner says, “God can be other than the one revealed in Jesus Christ as Light and Life, namely, the Hidden God, who as such operates not in the Word and its light, but in that which is not ‘word’ or ‘knowledge’, in darkness”. See also, *The Mediator*, trans. Olive Wyon (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1947), 296.

¹⁴ Dillenberger, *God Hidden and Revealed*, 148-9. Here, Dillenberger introduces two distinct hiddenness in Luther: “And it is already clear that Luther connects the hidden God with God’s disclosure in Christ in His suffering....It ought not be denied that Luther spoke of the hiddenness of God apart from his hiddenness in Christ.”

¹⁵ McGrath introduces this terms of Hiddenness I and Hiddenness II in his book, *Luther’s Theology of the Cross*, 165; Tracy in “The Hidden God: The Divine Other of Liberation”, 11. Daniel Migliore spoke of this distinction between Hiddenness I and Hiddenness II in his lecture of “Doctrine of God” in 2000, spring semester in Princeton Theological Seminary.

such body of literature on what Calvin thought about God's hiddenness."¹⁶ The seriousness of the matter goes deeper when we keep in mind T. H. L. Parker's remark in his *Calvin's Doctrine of the Knowledge of God* that "the concept of *Deus absconditus* is as native to Calvin's theology as it is to Luther's."¹⁷ I myself evaluate that B. A. Gerrish's article on "To the unknown God: Luther and Calvin on the Hiddenness of God" is the most outstanding comparative study ever attempted. It reveals some remarkable insights on Luther's and Calvin's idea on the hiddenness of God. However, it is a rather short article, and does not seem to make enough effort to compare Luther and Calvin on the theme, because most of the pages are allotted to describe each person's ideas respectively, rather than focusing on comparing them. Besides, his basic position on the relation between Luther's God hidden and revealed is firmly oriented around the rejection of any efforts to synthesize or harmonize those two contradictory concepts of Hiddenness I and Hiddenness II: "It is not my intention to attempt a synthesis of the various lines of Luther's thought on God's hiddenness. I do not find myself driven by the kind of harmonizing impulse that motivates the excellent study by Hellmut Bandt."¹⁸ However, my thesis puts great emphasis on a substantial comparison of the hiddenness of God between Luther and Calvin. Besides, my perspective is different, because I am sure that Luther stands in the perspective of a paradoxical harmony as to the relation between the hidden God and revealed God. I will pursue the evidence to prove my position.¹⁹

The great ignorance of Calvin's idea on God's hiddenness is well represented in Brunner's remark that that "Calvin does not make Luther's distinction—which Luther feels to be so important—between the 'revealed' and the 'hidden' will of God, and if he does think of it, he takes a quite different view."²⁰ Is this really so? Does Calvin not make a distinction

¹⁶ Gerrish, "To the Unknown God: Luther and Calvin on the Hiddenness of God", 141.

¹⁷ T. H. L. Parker, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Knowledge of God* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1969), 27.

¹⁸ Gerrish, "To the unknown God: Luther and Calvin on the Hiddenness of God", 134.

¹⁹ See the below Chapter V.2. "Hiddenness I and Hiddenness II"; 3. "The Relation between the Hidden God and the Revealed God".

²⁰ Brunner, *The Christian Doctrine of God, Dogmatics* vol.1, 325.

between the revealed and hidden will of God? Can we say they are quite different? My position is that unlike Brunner's statement, Calvin, too, clearly follows Luther's distinction between the hidden will and the revealed will of God. His views share much substance with Luther's thought, though he has a different emphasis.²¹ My understanding is that, though the concept of the *Deus absconditus* does not take up as much a part of Calvin's theory as Luther's, it is a substantial part of Calvin's theology.

More than Luther, Calvin emphasizes the order in nature through which the majesty and glory of God come to us.²² In the works of creation, God left an indelible imprint that even the simple-minded cannot deny.²³ However, because of our sin, we cannot know the objective revelation of God in creation. God had to enter history by creating a relationship with humankind. God accommodates to our human weakness and sinfulness. He comes to us in a finite way. This is a major theme in Calvin's theology. The anthropomorphism of the Bible is to be understood in terms of this Divine accommodation. Behind this idea of accommodation lies God's incomprehensibility. When God speaks to us, it is like a mother babbles to her child, like baby talk. God is known in the foolishness and hiddenness of the gospel. The gospel is the hidden wisdom that surpasses even the height of the heaven that even angels are astonished by it. The world is God's theatre where God's glory is displayed in the most revelatory way.²⁴ God is hidden above all in his revelation on the Cross: the weakness of God's power. Calvin takes a greater note of the hiddenness of God in creation and providence and history and points to one ultimate hidden point, the crucified and hidden God on the Cross. In his theological world, the climax of God's accommodation is the Incarnation. Calvin thinks that God hides himself in the Incarnation. The glorious God is hidden under the

²¹ See Chapter VI.2.b.2) "Against 'God with Two Different Wills'"; Chapter VI.1. "Hiddenness I and Hiddenness II", below.

²² Gerrish, "To the unknown God: Luther and Calvin on the Hiddenness of God", 142.

²³ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, 2 vols (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960). I.v.3. Hereafter abbreviated into *Inst* (book.chapter.section)

²⁴ Cf. Susan E. Schreiner, *The Theatre of His Glory* (Durham: The Labyrinth Press, 1991).

abasement of the flesh (Comm. Phil, 2:7). God's Divinity is concealed under a veil of flesh.²⁵ It is certainly true when we survey Calvin's doctrine of the Divine counsel. *Arcanum*—the “secret” or hidden counsel of God—is the characteristic way that Calvin speaks of Divine predestination. The problem of the Divine will and hiddenness of God for Calvin is located in his double predestination where the will of God appears to be divided against itself. In Calvin's theology, this is the ultimate hidden area beyond our understanding that God from all eternity elects some to salvation and some to perdition.

We have several key questions relating to Calvin. Can we find a hidden God theory in Calvin similar to Luther's? Can we find the distinction between Hiddenness I and Hiddenness II in Calvin? If so, what is the relation between the revealed God and the hidden God? Are there any peculiar characteristics in Calvin's understanding of God hidden and revealed, clearly distinguished from Luther's understanding? What is the affinity and disparity between them?

Another controversial issue of the relation is around the image of a God of love and that of a harsh God of predestination with inscrutable will in Luther and Calvin. Many scholars including A. Ritschl, O. Ritschl, Paul Althaus, Harry McSorley, F. Kattenbusch, David Wright, B. A. Gerrish, Marijn de Kroon, and A. M. Hunter have shown diverse views on that.²⁶ In particular, we will take notice of some special trends in the literature that label Luther's God a God of love and Calvin's God a cold austere God of predestination. For instance, Reinhold Seeberg concludes his treatment of the theology of Calvin in his famous book, *The History of Doctrines*, with this comparison: “The God of Calvin is the omnipotent Will, ruling

²⁵ *Inst.* II.xiii.2.

²⁶ For Luther's view, we will survey those views of Paul Althaus, O Ritschl, Harry J. McSorley, and F. Kattenbusch in Chapter V.6. “A Harmonious Dual Image of a God of Love and a God of Predestination”, and for Calvin's view, we will survey the views of A. Ritschl, O. Ritschl, B.A Gerrish, Benjamin Warfield, Kostlin, Marijn de Kroon, Wilhelm Niesel, Fred H. Klooster, James B. Torrance, A.M. Hunter, Ronald. S. Wallace in Chapter VI.4. “A Harmonious Dual Image of a God of Predestination and a God of Love”, below.

throughout the world; the God of Luther is the omnipotent energy of Love manifest in Christ.”²⁷ Efforts to contrast a God of love and mercy with the stern and obstinate God of predestination have been made by scholars such as Max Weber and Ernst Troeltsch. Weber, wanting to contrast Luther and Calvin in his book, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, makes an epigrammatic statement, “The Father in heaven of the New Testament ... is gone, His place has been taken by transcendental being... who with His quite incomprehensible decrees has decided the fate of every individual...from eternity.”²⁸ Likewise, Troeltsch, in *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*, states “Instead of the characteristic of happiness in the grace of God which forgives sins, we find the certainty of belonging to the elect, and a spirit of active energy.”²⁹ Recently, Randall Zachman, following these lines laid by Seeberg, Weber, and Troeltsch, affirms in his recent book, *The Assurance of Faith*, that Calvin’s doctrine of God is seen to be cold, remote, and austere, and in contrast with Luther’s God of love. More concretely he indicates that Calvin’s God predestines some to salvation and most to damnation in God’s hidden majestic will, whereas Luther’s God dies for the forgiveness of sinners according to God’s revealed will.³⁰ However, I understand that these perspectives, which see a sharp contrast between Luther’s God and Calvin’s God, are superficial and biased, and far from what Luther and Calvin really intended. My assertion is that Luther and Calvin’s God is not restricted to any one side; therefore, I believe that it is not right to dichotomize Luther’s God and Calvin’s God in this way. In this thesis, I assert that, in relation to God hidden and revealed, Luther and Calvin maintain the balance between those two images, pursuing the unity of God hidden and revealed in spite of the apparent

²⁷ Reinhold Seeberg, *The History of Doctrines*, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1977), vol. II, 416.

²⁸ Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons (New York: Charles Scribners’ Sons, 1958), 103-4.

²⁹ Ernst Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*, 2 vols, trans. Olive Wyon (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1981), vol. 2, 584.

³⁰ Randall Zachman, *The Assurance of Faith* (Minneapolis: Fortress press, 1993), 3. Here, Zachman cites the views of Reinhold Seeberg, Max Weber, and Ernst Troeltsch mentioned above.

contradiction. In particular, to demonstrate Luther's God as a God of predestination, we will explore Luther's view on "double predestination." Whether Luther has the view of double predestination and if so, whether he keeps on the view throughout his whole career is a controversial issue among scholars. We will argue this issue when we deal with "a harmonius dual image of a God of love and a God of predestination."³¹

Besides, we are interested in the structure of God's wrath and love, which is more complex than we can comprehend. Can we say Luther's God is just a God of love, not a God of wrath, or otherwise? In particular, as for God's wrath, Luther's words looks sometimes ambiguous. Some phrases of Luther's criticize the perspective to see God as a God of wrath as "demonic, idolatrous, and perverse",³² but other phrases emphasize God's wrath as God's substantial reality to deal with the world and display his attributes of righteous and justice. It is our task to draw the reasonable perspective on what kind of God Luther wants to describe.

In addition, I am critical of Dowey's comment that "he (Calvin) never conceived of his theological task as an effort to harmonize the deeper paradoxes of Scripture or to explain what he regarded as its central mysteries."³³ My theological understanding is the opposite. In this thesis, I am going to attempt to show Calvin's persistent and ongoing logical and theological efforts to harmonize the theological puzzles surrounding God hidden and revealed and compare them with Luther's basic method to describe the mystery of God.

Thus, this thesis will be a comparative study between God hidden and revealed in Luther and Calvin, with a focus on the relation of God hidden and revealed. More concretely, the methods used here will be a combination of comparative and systematic methods with some historical survey. Much weight will be placed on a comparative method, because the main

³¹ See Chapter V. 6. "A Harmonius Dual Image of a God of Love and a God of Predestination", below.

³² *LW* 12:322 (Psalm 51:1) Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan and Hellmut T. Lehmann (St. Louis: Concordia, and Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1955). vol. 12, 322. This will be abbreviated into *LW* (volume.page).

³³ Edward A. Dowey, *The Knowledge of God in Calvin's Theology* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1952; extended ed., 1994), 40.

purpose of this thesis is to investigate Calvin's doctrine of God hidden and revealed and show its points of convergence with and divergence from Luther's, and how developed and substantial it is in Calvin's theology. Through the method of comparison, we will prove that, contrary to general expectation, Calvin, too, has an elaborate hidden God theory almost tantamount to that of Luther. For more direct and clearer comparison, we will put Luther and Calvin side by side in a parallel structure in each part. I understand that the relation between God hidden and revealed has multifarious facets to let us see various aspects of the relation of God hidden and revealed.³⁴ The significant facets will be the relations between God and the mask (modes of accommodation), Hiddenness I and Hiddenness II, God's hidden will and revealed will, a God of love and a God of predestination, God's love and wrath, law and gospel, the Holy Spirit and the hidden God, and the Trinity and the hidden God doctrine. These facets are closely interrelated and sometime overlapping, but I am sure that they, like mirrors in different angles, will be effective to reflect the whole picture of God hidden and revealed in a more comprehensive way. We will depend on the systematic method to pursue these diverse aspects of the relation between God hidden and revealed one by one and then analyze and synthesize them so that we can have a more comprehensive and objective perspective of the relation between God hidden and revealed. Along with these methods, I will not ignore historical methods to get a broader perspective on some particular issues—especially on the development of Luther's concept of the hidden God or Calvin's employment of accommodation. Luther's view on God's hiddenness is so ambiguous and oscillating as to

³⁴ I have the view that reality is beyond our comprehension, but it exists in the world, in the form of "unity in diversity." We can see reality through multifarious facets which are the mirrors reflecting it in different angles. I believe that we can approach reality more closely when we see it through more multifarious mirrors in different angles. For instance, in the Bible, God is incomprehensible. But the incomprehensible God as reality showed himself through multifarious mirrors such as a myriad of symbols, incidents, prophets, all kinds of his creation and at last through his Son. Therefore, the Bible says, "In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets *at many times and in various ways*, but in the last days he has spoken to us by his Son [Heb.1:1]." However, all mirrors are not same in its clarity to reveal reality. In the Bible a mirror of Christ is the mirror clearer than any other mirror. The mirror of Christ can show us God more clearly than all the mirrors put together in nature. At the same time, we can say that, looking through more mirrors, we will have more comprehensive picture of reality.

drive scholars into turmoil. Therefore, we need three keys as the tool to approach a comprehensive perspective of it: (1) the distinction between Hiddenness I and Hiddenness II; (2) a *Divine paradox*; (3) two different perspectives of humans and God. These are the decisive tools to solve complexities of the relation between God hidden and revealed. Along with these, we will focus on the nature and function of the mask. It is a mistake to belittle the worth and function of God's mask and regard it as just an instrument to hide God himself or an obstacle to hinder our perception of God himself.³⁵ In Luther's view, God's mask is most complex and significant. It is not too much to say that the real understanding of the hiddenness of God in Luther can be obtained through our proper understanding of God's mask.

As for the material of the study of Luther's doctrine of God hidden and revealed, we will mainly use *The Bondage of the Will*, his *Lectures on Genesis, Psalms, Jonah, and Galatians*. Calvin's statements on the hidden God are scattered in fragments here and there, especially, in his *Institutes*, book I, Chapter 16-18, book III, Chapter 21-24, in his *Commentaries on Genesis, Psalms, Isaiah, Rome, and Hebrew*, in his *Sermons on Job*, and in his treatise, *Concerning the eternal Predestination of God*. However, it will be fruitful to gather those fragments so that we can see the shape of his thought on this.

Our structure reflects the main focus of this thesis, the comparison of the relation between God hidden and revealed in Luther and Calvin. The main structure largely consists of three large parts: Part A deals with Hiddenness I in Luther and Calvin. Part B deals with Hiddenness II in Luther and Calvin. Part C deals with the relation between God hidden and revealed in Luther and Calvin. The conclusion will be a summary and evaluation.

Part A is divided into two chapters: Luther's Hiddenness I and Calvin's Hiddenness I. Their comparison will be the conclusion of Part A. Chapter I, dealing with Luther's Hiddenness I, begins with the question of "Why does God hide?" This question is the natural

³⁵ This will be argued in this thesis, Chapter I.5. "Hiding to Reveal: The Nature of the Mask and Its Function", below.

beginning, considering that all hiddenness of God is due to God's intention to hide. We will focus not only on the infinite distance between God and humanity, but also on the benevolent Divine intention hidden in it. As the background of Luther's hidden God, I will discuss medieval nominalism, and Luther's theology of the Cross, contrasted with the theology of glory. Our preliminary exploration of the theology of the Cross is significant because it is the matrix of the concept of the hidden God. Then I will pursue the development of the concept of the hidden God in Luther's works beginning with his *First Lectures on the Psalms* (1513-16). Here I will consider the fivefold application for the expression of God's hiding place, and try to find out what is the basic form of the hidden God perceived in the *First Lectures on the Psalms*, and how it had developed and what kinds of elements had been added to the idea of God hidden and revealed. Next I will discuss the mask of God, especially focussing on its rich and complex nature and function. We will explore the major masks such as nature, the Bible, the Incarnation, the Cross, the Word and Sacraments, and then treat the question of how God works in the mask and how God stays in the mask.

In Chapter II, in contrast with Luther's theme of mask, God's accommodation will be treated, together with the interrelation between the mask and accommodation. My first question in Calvin, "Why does God accommodate?" will be treated from various perspectives: a great gulf between the Creator and creatures, between God and human beings, which can be seen in Calvin's remark: "The Divine nature is infinitely exalted above the comprehension of our understanding."³⁶ Here I will talk about three kinds of impassable gulfs, and then proceed to God's special favors for humankind as the motive of Divine accommodation. Next, we will explore the background of Calvin's idea of accommodation. Here we will ask several questions: Did Calvin newly invent the idea of accommodation? If not, did Calvin borrow it from others? If Calvin borrowed it, did he adapt it in a peculiar

³⁶ *Comm. on Ps. 86:8*. See the abbreviation at the front of this thesis to see the full reference of *Comm. on*.

fashion? What is the relation between the rhetorical tradition and Calvin's accommodation? Once these questions are answered, we will move on the discussion, as a symmetrical counterpart of Luther's main masks, the major modes of accommodation such as nature, the Bible, the Incarnation, the Cross, and the Word and Sacraments. Especially, as for God's strategy for accommodation, we will ask, "To connect the impassable gulf, what strategy does God employ?" We will pay attention to some functions of modes of accommodation to make accommodation possible. Here, the comparison between accommodation and the idol may be argued. The conclusion of this part will be a comprehensive comparison of Hiddenness I between Luther and Calvin.

Part B, as in Part A, consists of Hiddenness II in Luther (Chapter III), and Hiddenness II in Calvin (Chapter IV). Their comparison will be the conclusion of Part B. Here, we will proceed into the heart of darkness in the Divine council. For Luther, God in Hiddenness II is characterized as God Himself as the "naked" God, a God as a remodelled *potentia absoluta*, a God of predestination, a God of freedom, and a God of the *mysterium tremendum*: the awesome and the fascinating. As for Calvin, God in Hiddenness II is characterized as God Himself as the "naked and absolute" God, God as a remodelled *potentia absoluta*, a God of predestination, a God of freedom, and a God of abyss and labyrinth. In conclusion, we will compare Luther and Calvin in Hiddenness II.

Part C is the apex of this thesis. It consists of three parts: the relation between God hidden and revealed in Luther (Chapter V), the relation between God hidden and revealed in Calvin (Chapter VI), and their comparison. The first question is how Luther and Calvin understand the relation between the hidden and the revealed God. The second question will be how similar and different are Luther's view and Calvin's view on this matter. More concretely, I will discuss the relation of Hiddenness I and Hiddenness II, the relation of the inscrutable hidden will and the revealed will in Words, and the relation of a God of wrath and a God of

love. Along with this, we will argue whether it is right to dichotomize Luther's God as a God of mercy, grace, and forgiveness, and Calvin's God as a God of harsh predestination and judgement. Next, we will treat the position and role of the Holy Spirit in the frame of the hidden God theory. Finally, we will examine the way to get to the knowledge of the hidden God and the role and characteristics of faith in the doctrine of the hidden God.

Through the comparison of the relation, we will show that Luther and Calvin have the view that the hidden God and the revealed God are one and the same God with one and the same will, though they look different, even contradictory to our limited reason. Much emphasis will be placed on their remarkably different approach: while Luther drives all theological contradiction into the juxtaposed conflict between God hidden and revealed and solves them with the *Divine paradox*, Calvin tries to shatter all contradiction with his logical arguments and his theological view of God before he kneels down before the mystery of God to pray for our understanding of its reality.

In conclusion, I will summarize those themes I have discussed throughout each chapter and I will reaffirm my answers to those questions I posed as the purpose of this thesis. Finally, I will evaluate the theological contribution of the hidden God theory in Luther and Calvin.

Part A. Hiddenness I in Luther and Calvin

Introduction

Luther's deep insight in the doctrine of the hidden God is that God hides to reveal himself. The naked God cannot approach us without veils or masks, because our sinful fragile nature cannot bear the majesty and glory of the naked God. The God who wants to reveal himself to humanity brings about some hiddenness, in the sense that God cannot show himself as he is and needs some masks or veils to reveal himself. If we borrow Gerrish's term, this 'hiddenness in revelation' belongs to Hiddenness I. Hiddenness I is to be distinguished from Hiddenness II—'hiddenness beyond revelation'. Can we find in Calvin Luther's insight that God hides to reveal himself? How is Calvin's large theme of accommodation related to Luther's mask?

Part A will be devoted to elucidating and comparing 'Hiddenness I' in Luther and Calvin. I will deal with many aspects of masks or modes of accommodation. Here, we will focus more on their nature and functions. In particular, for our proper understanding of Luther's hidden God in revelation, it is significant to discuss the abundant functions of the mask far exceeding the familiar concept of the mask just for hiding. In Calvin's accommodation, we will deal with Divine purposes, and Divine strategies for accommodation including the double movement of Divine condescension and human lifting up. Our next task will be the relation between the mask and accommodation. Besides, we will discuss the coexistence of Divine hiddenness and revelation in a paradoxical way. This investigation of Hiddenness I in Luther and Calvin and their comparison will lead up to a substantial insight on their theological understanding of God hidden and revealed, on the convergences and divergences in their theological emphases.

Chapter I. Hiddenness I in Luther: God in the Mask

Luther states in a sermon on 24 February 1517, “A human being hides his / her own things to deny them; God hides his own things to reveal them.”¹ Alister E. McGrath evaluates that this is an “excellent summary of Luther’s early understanding of the significance of hiddenness of God’s revelation”.² This statement characterizes Hiddenness I in a concise way. This suggests that hiddenness and revelation have an inseparable relation. Strictly speaking, hiddenness is an innate attribute of revelation, and the word revelation already implies the concept of hiddenness since God is supposed to wear some veil to reveal himself. Revelation always accompanies hiddenness. In a sense, it is paradoxical that the hiddenness comes from God’s intention to reveal himself. Lohse comments that it is evident that Luther’s view of the hiddenness of God is different from the traditional view of God’s invisibility, just as being revealed is not equal with being visible. According to his explanation, the Cross is visible to all, but the God who is “revealed” in it is not recognizable to all, but only to those in faith. Therefore, Lohse evaluates that “respecting the doctrine of God, Luther’s distinction between ‘hidden’ and ‘revealed’ is new, and for him fundamental.”³

In this chapter, I will investigate some essential features of Hiddenness I in Luther’s thoughts. We will explore why God hides himself. Then we will proceed to the matter of how Luther’s idea of the hidden God in his works developed, and then examine the central masks of God—nature, the Bible, the Incarnation, the Cross, and the Word and Sacraments. Our special focus will be placed on the nature of the mask and its function. Along with this, we will explore how the hidden God exists in the masks, and in what way God works in it.

¹ *D. Martin Luthers Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe. Weimarer Ausgabe* (Weimar: Hermann Bohlau, 1883), 1.138.13. (*Sermo Dies Matthiae A. 1517*): “*Homo abscondit sua ut neget, Deus abscondit sua ut revelet.*” Hereafter abbreviated into *WA* (volume.page.line)

² McGrath, *Luther’s Theology of the Cross*, 167.

1. Why does God hide?

Luther's writings put forward three reasons for God to hide. First, Luther believes that God's innate nature is too majestic and too glorious for our eye. God is in inaccessible light. He is an incomprehensible hidden God full of Divine Majesty. In his blinding glory and power, God is beyond humanity. Therefore, he argues that God cannot meet us when he is clothed in his majesty. Human beings simply cannot bear exposure to the glory of Divine Majesty. God had told Moses, "You cannot see my face; for man shall not see me and live... (Exod. 33:20)." Paul Althaus aptly comments that in Luther's view God does not present himself to us uncovered, but covers and clothes himself with a mask so that we may bear him and grasp him. God thus comes to us hidden by 'fog and shadows' that he has made for our benefit. This means that he concretizes, humanizes and incarnates himself for us.⁴

Second, Luther points out in his *Lectures on Genesis* that our corrupted nature is another reason why God hides himself. Before the corruption, Luther surmises that God appeared to Adam without covering.⁵ After the original sin, Luther insists that the "noise" in Gen. 3:8 is the veil God covered himself with to show himself to Adam. Since then, God has been continuing to wear a myriad of diverse masks such as the sanctuary in the tabernacle, the pillar of a cloud and a pillar of fire in the desert. Luther points out that Moses calls these "appearances" and "shadowings" of God which manifest God. God hides himself because of our limited and deformed understanding caused by corruption:

³ Bernhard Lohse, *Martin Luther's Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 216.

⁴ *WA* 39¹.245. (*Die Promotionsdisputation von Palladius und Tileman*)

⁵ Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan and Hellmut T. Lehmann (St. Louis: Concordia, and Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1955). vol. 1, 11. This will be abbreviated into *LW* (volume.page). Therefore, this will be *LW* 1.11. (Gen 1:2)

This nature of ours has become so misshapen through sin, so depraved and utterly corrupted, that it cannot recognize God or comprehend His nature without covering. It is for this reason that those coverings are necessary.⁶

Third, in *The Bondage of the Will*, Luther suggests that God hides himself so that “there may be room for faith.”⁷ If God is not hidden, but reveals himself thoroughly and completely, he is no more God, he is no more an object of our faith. However, as long as God is hidden, our faith is required. If God were completely known to the eye of the world, what would be needed to perceive him would be just our reason. However, God has chosen to work under the contraries so that he can be understood only to people of faith.

Fourth, God hides himself to judge and make foolish the wisdom of the world, which is so proud but fails to find the real God. 1 Cor. 2 expresses that God does not like the wisdom of the world for “in the wisdom of God, the world through its wisdom did not know him (God)” (1 Cor. 1:20). This is traced back to Isaiah 29:10-14, which says that God was greatly disappointed with the complete ignorance of the wisdom of the world in knowing God. This disappointment is well represented in Jesus Christ’ citing Isaiah 6:9-10, when he tries to explain why he told people the secrets of the kingdom of heaven in parable: “You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving. For this people’s heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them” (Matthew 13:13-15). This is the very context where Luther finds the reason why God hides: “God has veiled these works under the weakness of suffering, as he has his deity under his humanity so that he might also veil reason and *make foolish the wisdom of the world.*”⁸

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ LW 33.62. (*Bondage of the Will*)

⁸ WA 3.547.25-548.9 (Psalm 76:21). Trans. Graham Tomlin, *The Power of the Cross*, 156.

2. The Development of the Hidden God in Luther's Theology and His Work

Luther's idea of the hidden God did not spring into his mind completely formed, but grew over time in his theological ideas and his writings. To understand its development, we will discuss his theology of the Cross as the matrix of his hidden God theory, and then consider how the idea of God's hiddenness developed from Luther's *First Lectures on the Psalms* (1513-16).

In May of 1518, Luther announced *theologia crucis* in opposition to *theologia gloriae* in his *Heidelberg Disputation*. Theses 16–21, in particular, contained the most important statements of what would come to be called *theologia crucis* or theology of the Cross.⁹ These theses emerged as fruits of Luther's development as a Biblical exegete and theologian, within a politically and economically tumultuous historical period.¹⁰

Luther describes the theology of the Cross as the essence of true theology. The theologians of glory attempt to peer into the "invisible things of God" through what has been made,¹¹ but only "puff up, blind, and harden" (Cf. Thesis 22). They are blind and puffed up for they claim that we in our actual sinful state can see God's works as such and God in them. However, the theologians of the Cross do not claim to be able to discover God's own self, but rather are content with knowing God in revelation, that is, in this suffering and on the Cross. Instead of trying to see through works of creation into the invisible things of God such as God's essence, they "comprehend" what is "visible and

⁹ Cf. Jos E. Vercruysse, "Luther's Theology of the Cross at the Time of the Heidelberg Disputation", *Gregorianum* 57 (1976): 532-48.

¹⁰ Mary M. Solberg, *Compelling Knowledge: A Feminist Proposal for an Epistemology of the Cross* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1997), 56.

¹¹ As Forde notes, there is an ongoing debate about the translation of "*ea, quae facta sunt*", literally meaning, "what have been made". Some interprets this as "creation" and some as "human works." The translation of *LW* (...those things which have actually happened) is ambiguous here. Cf. Gerhard O. Forde, *On Being a Theologian of the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997), 72. footnote 3.

manifest” of God through suffering and the Cross. This affirms that there can be no direct knowledge of God. God can reveal himself only in concealment, “in the humility and shame of the Cross”.¹² True theology and knowledge of God are to be found in the crucified Christ.¹³ “It is through undergoing the torment of the Cross, death, and hell that true theology and the true knowledge of God come about.”¹⁴

Luther’s ideas of the hidden God are inseparably related to his theology of the Cross. While discussing the doctrine of faith in the development of Luther’s theology of the Cross, McGrath asks a serious question: “Who is this God who deals thus with man?” Here, McGrath indicates that Luther’s answer to this question can be summarized as follows: “The God who deals with the sinful man in this astonishing way is none other than ‘the crucified and hidden God’ (*Deus crucifixus et absconditus*)—the God of the *theologia crucis*.”¹⁵ Paul Althaus, too, relates the definition of the theology of the Cross to God’s hiddenness in revelation in Luther’s work:

The theology of the Cross means: God let himself be known in that, which according to natural judgement signifies the opposite of Godly. His wisdom appears in foolishness, his splendor in disgrace. For the natural man, his revelation is outright hiddenness.¹⁶

Therefore, the hidden God is the center of Luther’s *theologia crucis*. The theology of the Cross, Luther tells us, speaks of the crucified and hidden God.¹⁷ In a sense, the theology of the Cross is the soil in which the idea of the hidden God sprouts.

Luther’s theology of the Cross as the matrix of his idea of the hidden God was motivated by his strong objection to the theology of glory represented by Thomism,

¹² LW 31.53 (Heidelberg Disputation, Thesis 20).

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ WA 5.176.31-32.

¹⁵ McGrath, *Luther’s Theology of the Cross*, 146-147.

¹⁶ Paul Althaus, “Die Bedeutung des Kreuzes im Denken Luthers”, in *Evangelium und Leben*, 55.

¹⁷ WA 1.613.23f (*Resolutiones disputationum de indulgentiarum virtute*, 1518): “*Theologus crucis (id est de*

mysticism, moralism, and nominalism.¹⁸ The serious fault of these is that they are rooted in a single human desire—the desire for an unbroken and direct communion with God such as mystic ascension, not through the revealed Christ.¹⁹ This desire to see God directly corresponds to Philip’s request in John 14:8, “Show us the Father.” It is like searching after the “absolute” or “naked” God. Luther rejected this strongly because it is dangerous for us to see the glory of God with our bare eyes. We cannot stand it. Furthermore, it is beyond the theologian’s task. God can be known only through the crucified hidden God. Especially in the *via moderna* the idea of “*facere quod in se est*” plays the role of catalyst to provide the insight of theology of the Cross. Luther’s theology of the Cross is an attack on human free will and the arrogant conviction of “*facere quod in se est*”. Luther sharply criticizes this idea in Thesis 16 of his famous Heidelberg Disputation: “The person who believes that he can obtain grace *by doing what is in him* adds sin to sin so that he becomes doubly guilty.” The double sin here refers to these: (1) “through sin they are far from God” and (2) yet “they presume to do good by their own ability.”²⁰ On the contrary, the theologian of the Cross knows that there is nothing to do but wait upon grace flowing down from the crucified and the hidden God, and God “gives the grace to the humble.”²¹ Luther’s theology of the Cross completely rejects pride and any human contribution to salvation. Salvation solely depends on the secret hand of the hidden God. The hidden God beyond revelation destroys and shatters human pride, which humbles individuals, and pushes them towards the grace of the crucified and hidden God in revelation. In the Thesis 18 of his famous Heidelberg Disputation, Luther reveals this idea as follows: “It is certain that man must utterly despair of his own ability before he is prepared to receive the grace of

deo crucifixo et abscondito loquens)...”

¹⁸ Cf. Walther von Loewenich, *Luther’s Theology of the Cross*, trans. Herbert J.A. Bouman (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1976), 20.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ LW 31.50. (Heidelberg Disputation)

²¹ Ibid.

Christ.”²² The “utter despair of one’s own ability” can be obtained only when the Cross attacks our sin and makes us humble by the strange work. The “utter despair” is the starting point where humans begin to receive the grace flowing down from the crucified hidden God.

Besides, Luther’s idea of the hidden God gleans some hints from some ideas of scholasticism in Luther’s age, in that Luther’s theology of the Cross can be interpreted as the revolt against Scholasticism. Especially we are concerned about two kinds of scholastic distinctions.

The first is distinction between *potentia absoluta* and *potentia ordinata*. Though Luther shows some strong dislike for this distinction, this concept is very useful for his developing the concept of the hidden God. Above all, such attributes as “freedom” or “sovereign power” in *potentia absoluta* correlate to the hidden God Luther wants to describe. The tension between God hidden and revealed may appear to be similar with that between *potentia absoluta* and *potentia ordinata*.²³

The second is the distinction between *voluntas beneplaciti* and *voluntas signi*. Ritschl insists that the concept of the *Deus absconditus* came from the scholastic distinction between *voluntas beneplaciti* and *voluntas signi*.²⁴ In scholasticism proper, the will of God in reference to creatures and their actions is usually divided into the will of good pleasure (*voluntas beneplaciti*) and the will of sign (*voluntas signi*). “The former is the Divine will taken in its proper sense; the latter is attributed to God by way of metaphor and composed of the various manifestations of the Divine will.”²⁵ Therefore, the *voluntas beneplaciti* affirms a nature in God in that God acts as he pleases in a way that is conditioned by what

²² Ibid., 31.51.

²³ McGrath, *Luther’s Theology of the Cross*, 167.

²⁴ Albrecht Ritschl, *Geschichte Studien zur Christlichen Lehre von Gott in Gesammelte Aufsätze* (Neue Folge, Freiburg i. B.: J.C.B. Mohr, 1986), 84-87.

²⁵ Bernard John Otten, *A Manual of the History of Dogmas*, vol. II (St. Louis, Mo., London : B. Herder, 1917), 64,

is well pleasing to himself. According to Ritschl's interpretation, this implies that the activity which is well pleasing to God has an arbitrary stamp which cannot be put into any norm or standard.²⁶ It is deeply related with God's capriciousness, where predestination is anchored. In his *Lectures on Genesis*, Luther describes the *voluntas beneplaciti* as "the essential will of God or His unveiled majesty, which is God himself", from which the eyes must turn away, for it cannot be grasped.²⁷ This essence of God is "his transcendent wisdom and omnipotent power". Luther insists that an investigation of this essential and Divine will, or of the Divine Majesty, must not be pursued but altogether avoided because this will is unsearchable.²⁸ Brunner comments that Luther equates it with the unsearchable election or rejection and that it involves disputation concerning the *nuda divinitas* (naked Divinity), which one should flee like the devil himself.²⁹ Luther understands the will of sign (*voluntas signi*) through the concept of "coverings". According to Luther, even though God did not want to give us a direct insight in this life into the will of good pleasure (*voluntas beneplaciti*), God merely wanted to indicate it by means of some coverings and external objects we can grasp: baptism, the Word, the Sacrament of the Altar. These are the Divine images and "the will of the sign", through which God treats us within the range of our comprehension.³⁰ Luther also distinguishes between them according to changeability. While "the will of His good pleasure" is uniform and unchangeable, "the will of His sign" is changeable. "Thus he did away with circumcision, Baptism, etc., although the same 'will of good pleasure,' which had been predetermined from eternity, continued in force."³¹

Luther's theology of the Cross can be characterized into five crucial points, which reflect the characteristics of Luther's doctrine of the hidden God.

²⁶ Albrecht Ritschl, *Geschichte Studien zur Christlichen Lehre von Gott in Gesammelte Aufsätze*, 77-87.

²⁷ LW 2.46. (Gen 6:5, 6).

²⁸ LW 2.47. (Gen 6:5, 6).

²⁹ Brunner, *Dogmatik*, vol. I, 344.

³⁰ LW 2.47. (Gen 6:5, 6).

³¹ LW 2.44. (Gen 6:5, 6).

First, Luther's theology of the Cross is evidently Christocentric. Human relationship to God depends solely on the saving act of Christ. God came down to us in his merciful condescension. Only through Christ's humanity can we ascend to God.³² Luther points emphatically to the Cross, the image of God's Son.³³ A theologian of the Cross speaks "of the crucified and hidden God".³⁴ In the *Heidelberg Disputation*, we find Luther's well-known axiom based on Christocentric view: "In the crucified Christ is true theology and recognition of God";³⁵ "To know Christ is to know the Cross and to understand God under the crucified flesh."³⁶

Second, the *theologia crucis* is a theology of revelation. While the theology of glory tries to see God directly through speculation, the theology of the Cross tries to see God in an indirect, concealed revelation. The theme of the theology of the Cross is that God reveals himself in the Cross. God does not present himself to us naked, but covers and clothes himself with a mask so that we may bear him and grasp him. True revelation is to be recognized in the sufferings and the Cross of Christ rather than in human moral activity or the created order. God's revelation in the Cross of Christ must be regarded as a hidden revelation which defies any attempt of human reason or human illusions concerning the capacity of human reason to discern God.

Third, Luther's theology of the Cross is an offensive theology.³⁷ While the theologians of glory try to "obtain grace by doing what is in him" (Thesis 16), the theologians of the Cross require that "man must utterly despair of his own ability before he is prepared to receive the grace of Christ" (Thesis 18). This is the most fundamental issue Luther tried to present in the *Heidelberg Disputation*. The main question of the *Disputation*

³² WA 4.647.19-21. (*Sermone aus den Jahren ca 1514-1520: De assumptione Beatae Mariae Virginis*)

³³ LW 31.153. (Explanations of the Ninety-Five Thesis)

³⁴ LW 31.225. (Explanations of the Ninety-Five Thesis)

³⁵ LW 31.53. (*Heidelberg Disputation*)

³⁶ WA 5.108.9. "*Sed Christum nosse, est crucem nosse et deum sub carne crucifixa intelligere.*"

³⁷ This view is emphasised by Gerhard O. Forde, in his book, *On Being a Theologian of the Cross* (Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans, 1997), 1-22.

is how to arrive at that righteousness that will enable us to stand before God. After analyzing the structure of the *Disputation*, Gerhard O. Forde introduces the image of a great arch stretching between two pillars.³⁸ The first pillar is the law of God, and the second pillar is the love of God. Here, Forde insists that the whole argument of the *Disputation* moves us along the arch from one pier in the law of God which cannot make human beings righteous, to a second pier in the love of God, which creates righteousness through faith in Christ. The way from the law of God to the love of God goes only through the Cross.³⁹ What sinners have to do is to despair and be slain by the accusation of the law and by genuine hardship and suffering, and to be raised with Christ who alone makes sinners into new creatures. Our Cross “destroys our self-confidence” so that now, instead of wanting to do something ourselves, we allow God to do everything in us.⁴⁰ The Cross is God’s attack on human sin, and paradoxically brings about salvation from sin.

Fourth, Luther’s theology of the Cross is a theology of paradox. Paradoxical truth pervades all of Luther’s theology of the Cross. “Luther’s thought is rooted in paradoxes.”⁴¹ The theology of glory seeks to know God directly in his obviously Divine power, wisdom, and glory; whereas the theology of the Cross paradoxically recognizes him precisely where he has hidden himself, in his sufferings and in all that which the theology of glory considers to be weakness and foolishness. The Cross is the center of paradoxical truth. On the Cross, God is revealed, but hidden. On the Cross, Christ is without sin, but dies as the greatest sinner of all. On the Cross, God’s strength lies hidden under the weakness and God’s wisdom under folly. Christ’s work is paradoxical. By his hunger, we are full, and by his thirst, our thirst is quenched; God’s eternal life lies hidden under death, and God’s victory lies under apparent defeat; by his death we live and by his suffering we are healed.

³⁸ Forde borrows this image from Bornkamm, “*Die Theologischen Thesen Luthers*”, 133. See Forde, *On being a Theologian of the Cross*, 21.

³⁹ Forde, *On Being a Theologian of the Cross*, 21.

⁴⁰ LW 31, 55. (Heidelberg Disputation)

Luther made the paradox the main principle in his theology of the Cross.

Fifth, Luther's theology of the Cross is a theology of faith. Everything which is concerned with the *theologia crucis* hinges upon faith. Only those who have faith understand the true meaning of the Cross. Where the unbeliever sees nothing but the helpless and hopeless sinner dying upon a Cross, the theologian of the Cross recognizes the presence and activity of the Cross and through them the crucified and hidden God, who is not merely present in human suffering, but actively works through it. As Luther himself emphasises, faith is the only key by which the hidden mystery of the Cross may be unlocked.

Our next key question is how the idea of hiddenness of God developed in Luther's works. The idea of hiddenness does not appear in a complete form all at once, which suggests that there was some growth of his idea of hiddenness along with his theological development. It will be important to bear these points in mind when we come to look at Calvin's understanding of the hiddenness. Practically, we find some development of it in Luther's works. The first signs appear in his earlier work, the *First Lectures on the Psalms* (1513-16). Here we find the budding ideas where Luther's views on the hiddenness of God begin to form. Especially startling is Luther's statement about fivefold application for the expression of God's hiding places: "God hides in the darkness of faith, in light inaccessible, in the mystery of the Incarnation, in the blessed Virgin, and in the Eucharist."⁴² This suggests several important ideas on Luther's understanding of the hiddenness of God.

First, God hides in the darkness of faith. This implies that the hidden God can be found only in the eye of faith. Luther interprets faith as "darkness". Here, the word "darkness" was not used as a negative word at all. Rather, darkness indicates the place where it is impossible or difficult to discern reality with the eye of the world—that is, a

⁴¹ Peter Vardy, *Luther* (Glasgow: Hans Grosshans, 1997), 88.

⁴² *LW* 10.119-120. (Psalm 18:11)

hiding place. In another Psalms lecture, Luther compares faith to “fog and darkness”:

But then thick darkness was under his feet, that is, he is known only by faith. This is the explanation of the descent of God. His feet stand in the soul, but in *the fog and darkness of faith*: then, however, we shall rise up to Him in the future by sight. But now he comes down to us by faith.⁴³

Here, Luther shows, by putting them side by side, that fog and darkness have a similar function—that is, darkness is similar to fog in hindering our sight. Then what does the darkness of faith mean? Can we say faith itself hinders our sight from seeing God? Not at all. It is the opposite. If God hides himself in the fog and darkness of faith, we can find the hidden God only in the fog and darkness of faith. This point is clear in another of Luther’s metaphors: “the deep things of God...are rightly called abysses or depth of water. God places the deeps into storehouses, that is, into concealed or hidden places, and these are the mysteries of faith and the Sacraments of the Church.”⁴⁴ Here, God’s deep things are compared to abysses hidden in the storehouse of faith. God’s hidden mystery cannot be seen in the normal sense. Only in the eye of faith can it be found. To sum up, God is hidden in darkness and fog, the storehouse of faith. This means that the hidden God can be found only by the eye of faith. Luther calls this the mystery of faith⁴⁵ and the riddle of faith.⁴⁶

Next, God hides in inaccessible light. To explain this, Luther refers to the passage of 1 Tim. 6:16, “He dwells in an unapproachable light.” In this passage, Luther emphasises the way of denials as the most suitable way to find the incomprehensible God, following mystic method represented by Dionysius:

⁴³ LW 10.118. (Psalm 18:9) [Italics are mine]

⁴⁴ LW 10.155-156. (Psalm 33:7)

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ LW 10.119-120. (Psalm 18:11)

...no mind can penetrate to Him, unless he has given up his own light and has been lifted up higher. Therefore blessed Dionysius teaches that one must enter into anagogical darkness and ascend by way of denials. For thus God is hidden and beyond understanding.⁴⁷

It is remarkable that Luther interprets this in terms of denials, while most theologians might stay on the level of thinking of God's incomprehensible and glorious attributes. Luther compares God's inaccessible light with our own light, concluding, "No mind can penetrate to Him, unless he has given up his own light." Therefore, Luther suggests that we can approach the hidden and incomprehensible God only through the way of denials of self-righteousness and our human reason represented by "his own light".⁴⁸ With our dim light, with our reason like a whore, with our self-righteousness, we cannot come to God hidden in inaccessible light. This idea heralds the theology of humility which "gives up his own light."⁴⁹ McGrath claims Luther's discovery of the righteousness of God as the "breakthrough" in Luther's theology,⁵⁰ which is directly related to his total rejection of self-righteousness: "For to the man who is unrighteous to himself and thus humble before God, God gives his grace."⁵¹

Third, "God hides in the mystery of the Incarnation."⁵² Elsewhere in his Psalms lectures, Luther expresses this idea in a very similar way: "Thus Isaiah calls Him 'verily a hidden God' (Isa. 45:15). The most gracious humanity of Christ is that bosom, formed from the purest cloth of the Virgin's flesh, and in the midst, I say, in the inmost part of that

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ In his book, *Grace and Reason* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1962), B. A. Gerrish explains that in Heavenly kingdom, reason is nothing but darkness (p.17) and enumerates the arrogance of reason in various ways: "the light of reason, the freedom of will, the integrity of man's natural capacities, and his good works" (p.76).

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ McGrath, *Luther's Theology of the Cross*, 96-181

⁵¹ *WA* 3.464.25-463.1, quoted in McGrath, *Luther's Theology of the Cross*, 125

⁵² *LW* 10.119-120. (Psalm 18:11)

humanity, He is concealed.”⁵³ He argues that now we see His Divinity “confusedly and in the riddle of His humanity”.⁵⁴ For Luther, God is concealed in the humanity of Christ which is His darkness.⁵⁵ We should notice that Christ is the most central revelation of God. He is where God is clearly revealed. However, Luther refers to the place where God is most clearly revealed as God’s hiding place. This is the key to understanding an important aspect of the relation between the hidden God and the revealed God—God is hidden in his revelation.⁵⁶

Fourth, “God hides in the blessed Virgin.”⁵⁷ Here, Luther uses the blessed Virgin as a synonym for the Church. These two words can be used interchangeably. So Luther argues that “this refers to *the Church or the blessed Virgin*, for He was concealed in both and continues to be hidden in the Church to the present.”⁵⁸ The crux of matter here is how Church can be God’s hiding place in spite of its visible form. Concerning this, in other Psalms lectures, Luther makes two points. The first is the distinction between the eye of the world and the eye of God. “The Church is dim to the world but clear to God.”⁵⁹ The second is that the main reason for Church to be God’s hiding place can be found in Luther’s division of Church into the visible Church and the invisible Church. The Church as the hiding place of God does not refer to the physical aspect of Church but instead refers to the spiritual side. While Luther compares the physical Church and the spiritual Church to waters and the deeps respectively, he states that the Church as the hidden place belongs to the spiritual Church established on invisible things:

⁵³ LW 10.445. (Psalm 74:11)

⁵⁴ LW 11.548. (Psalm 121:5)

⁵⁵ LW 10.119-120. (Psalm 18:11)

⁵⁶ For a detailed discussion, see the below Chapter V.3. “The Relation between the Hidden God and the Revealed God”.

⁵⁷ LW 10.119-120. (Psalm 18:11)

⁵⁸ Ibid. [Italics mine]

⁵⁹ Ibid. [Italics mine]

For the assembly of saints, or the Church, is in any case manifest according to the flesh as to where and when they are in existence. But according to the spirit they are placed in storehouses, that is, in hidden places, so that they themselves may not yet see, but only believe the places into which they are put. For they are placed and established on invisible things, which no human being can see but which he can believe. And this is what it means to be placed, to be made firm by faith in hidden things, things that can be believed.⁶⁰

Finally, “God hides in the Eucharist.” What is the relation between the hidden God and the Eucharist? God is present as a hidden God in the bread and blood. Sacraments are where God reveals and hides himself at the same time. In Luther, God hidden in the Eucharist is deeply related to God’s immanence in his creation. God permeates creation. All creation is a mask behind which God conceals himself and works all in all. However, Sacraments are where God intends to reveal himself more clearly. The signs—the Word, Christ, and the Sacraments—are the God-given means of knowing God. So that we can comprehend with our limited capacity, God avails Himself of these signs, enters them, and is in them the real Divine truth for us. Luther refers to the place God reveals himself most clearly as a hiding place. The place God reveals himself clearly is none other than the place God hides himself. This suggests that revelation and hiddenness happen in a same event. They are not contradictory, but they belong to one entity with different aspects.

I estimate that what is described in Luther’s *First Lectures on the Psalms* is, however, just a limited and primordial aspect of his thought on God’s hiddenness. The hiddenness of God represented here is most related to Hiddenness I—God is hidden in revelation. It is hard to find the concept of Hiddenness II—God is hidden beyond revelation. We cannot find any idea of creation as God’s universal mask. The hiding place of God is described as very limited. However, these basic ideas in his *First Lectures on the Psalms* are ready to develop into a well-developed hidden God theory. The mature aspect of this doctrine takes

⁶⁰ LW 10.156. (Psalm 33:7)

place when Luther makes connections between these basic ideas and other distinctive themes that are emerging in his theology. I can suggest the main five points here.

The first is the harmony between Hiddenness I and Hiddenness II. In Luther's Psalms lectures (1513-15), Hiddenness I is emphasised, but in *The bondage of the will* (1525), Luther introduces another line of hiddenness—Hiddenness II. Here, Luther strongly delineates the sharp conflict between Hiddenness I and Hiddenness II. Finally, in his *Lectures on Genesis* (1539), he pursues the harmony between Hiddenness I and Hiddenness II. We will discuss these points more concretely later.⁶¹

The second is the centrality of Christ. We find some budding idea of Christocentric exposition in Luther's *First Lectures on the Psalms*, which suggests that Christ is the sole key to understanding the Psalter. "Whatever is said literally of the Lord Jesus Christ in his person must be understood allegorically of the help that is like him, and of the church conformed to him in everything. It must also be understood tropologically of every spiritual and inner person: in opposition to the flesh and outer person."⁶² This Christocentric idea continues to develop in his whole works. In the *Heidelberg Disputation* (1518), Luther connects the hidden God with God's disclosure in Christ, particularly in his suffering. "This is clear, that he who does not know Christ, does not know the hidden God in His suffering."⁶³ Here Luther keeps to his Christological perspective: "In the crucified Christ is true theology and recognition of God."⁶⁴ In *The Bondage of the Will* (1525), he insists, "For neither do we teach anything but Christ crucified...For there is no other wisdom to be taught among Christians, than that which is 'hidden in a mystery.'"⁶⁵ In his *Lectures on Galatians* (1535), Luther warns us "true Christian theology does not present God to us in His majesty, as Moses and other things do, but Christ born of the Virgin as our

⁶¹ For a more detailed explanation, see the below Chapter V.2. "Hiddenness I and Hiddenness II".

⁶² *WA* 55.1.6-10.

⁶³ *LW* 31.53. (Heidelberg Disputation)

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ Martin Luther, *The Bondage of the Will*, trans. Henry Cole (Grand Rapids: Eerdmann, 1931), 80.

Mediator and High Priest.”⁶⁶ Here, he prohibits us from straying into heaven with idle speculations to investigate God in his incomprehensible power, wisdom, and majesty. Whoever investigates the majesty of God will be consumed by His glory. Finally, Luther adjures us to begin “where Christ began—in the Virgin’s womb, in the manger, and at His mother’s breasts”, interpreting his whole life as the very way God might present himself to our sight.⁶⁷ In his later *Lectures on Genesis* (1542), the most famous axiom consolidating the unity of God hidden and revealed is expressed: “whosoever loses Christ, who is the revealed God, also loses the hidden God who is not revealed.”⁶⁸ In Luther, the Christocentric view covers his whole span of life. It was so significant a principle in his theology that he cannot give it up at all, and it is crucial to his understanding of the hidden God. For Luther, Christ is not only the mirror to let us see the mystery of the hidden God beyond revelation, but also the ladder to lead us to him.

The third is the development of God’s paradoxical way of working under the opposite continues, related to his concept of *opus alienum* / *opus suum*. In the *First Lectures on the Psalms*, Luther stresses that God acts hiddenly under his opposite. God condemns in order to save and he kills in order to raise. In his interpretation on the Psalm 4, Luther says, “He shows you good things, but only through evils. He is wonderful in that he shows good things especially when he shows evil things.”⁶⁹ On Psalm 111: 4, he wrote,

These are wonderful works: not only the miracles which He did, but much more the fact that He killed death by death, punishment by punishment, sufferings by sufferings, disgrace by disgrace, so that in Christ death is so precious in sight of the Lord (Ps. 116:15) that it is eternal life, punishment is joy, suffering is pleasure, disgrace is glory; and, on the contrary, life is death...these wonderful works as to their root and cause were done in Christ’s suffering.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ LW 26.28-29. (Gal 1:3, 1535)

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ LW 5.46. (Gen 26:9)

⁶⁹ WA 3.64.5-6. (Psalm 4, 1513-16), quoted in Graham Tomlin, *The Power of the Cross*, 173.

⁷⁰ WA 4.243.7-15. = LW 11.377-7. (Psalm 111:4)

In his comments on Psalm 119: 45, Luther directly indicates the term of *alienum opus* and *opus suum*, which would later develop in the context of the Cross. “He crucifies and kills, so that he may revive and glorify. Thus he does a work that is foreign to him so that he may do his own work (*alienum opus eius ab eo, ut faciat opus suum*) (Isa. 28:21).”⁷¹ These concepts briefly contoured in the *First Lectures on the Psalms* consistently reoccur and continually develop throughout his whole works. In his *Lectures on Romans*, given in summer, 1516, Luther states, “For what is good for us is hidden, and that so deeply that it is hidden under the opposite. Thus our life is hidden under death, love for ourselves under hate for ourselves, glory under ignominy, salvation under damnation, our kingship under exile, heaven under hell, wisdom under foolishness, righteousness under sin, power under weakness.”⁷² In the last four Theses of the *95 Theses*, published in October 1517, Luther contrasts the false security offered by indulgences directly with the Cross and suffering, following Christ “through penalties, deaths and hells.” We can enter Heaven “through many tribulations rather than through a false assurance of peace”.⁷³ In Luther’s *Explanations of the 95 Theses*, planned in late 1517, but published only in August 1518, Luther makes the distinction between God’s alien and proper work prominent.

When God begins to justify a man, he first of all condemns him; him whom he wishes to raise up, he destroys him whom he wishes to heal, he smites, and the one to whom he wishes to give life, he kills...He does this however when he destroys man and when he humbles and terrifies him into the knowledge of himself and of his sins...However this consternation is the beginning of salvation...in short, God works a strange work (*opus alienum*), in order that he may work his own work (*opus suum*).⁷⁴

⁷¹ LW 11.451. (Psalm 119:45)

⁷² LW 25.383. (Rom 9:3, 1516)

⁷³ LW 31.33. (Ninety-Five Theses)

⁷⁴ LW 31.99. (Explanation of the Ninety-Five These)

In the *Lectures on Hebrews* (1517/1518), we can find another mature aspect of *opus alienum* and *opus suum* in relation to the concept of God's way of "working under the contrary". Through his visible and apparent *opus alienum* such as sorrow and tribulation, judgement, wrath, death, and evil, in brief, the Cross, God brings a man to his real, invisible, true work, the rejoicing and pacifying justification, yet not revealed, but hidden *sub contrario*, within the storm of his *opus alienum*. This is, however, only understood by believers, who know that the nature of faith is "to see what one does not see, and not see what one sees".⁷⁵ In 1525, in *The Bondage of the Will*, God's paradoxical way of "working under the contrary" and his *opus alienum* and *opus suum* are united and provide the mature aspect of God's hiddenness.

It [everything which is believed] cannot, however, be more deeply hidden than under an object, perception, or experience which is contrary to it. Thus when God makes alive he does it by killing, when he justifies he does it by making men guilty, when he exalts to heaven, he does it by bringing down to hell, as Scripture says: "The Lord kills and brings to life; he brings down to Sheol and raises up" (1 Sam. 2:6)... Thus God hides his eternal goodness and mercy under eternal wrath, his righteousness under apparent iniquity.⁷⁶

Luther's idea of God's paradoxical way of "working under the contrary" appears in his later life, in his *Lectures on Genesis* 21:1-3 (1539).

Therefore the prophet [Isa. 45:15] calls Him "a God who hides himself". For under the curse a blessing lies hidden; under the consciousness of sin righteousness; under death, life; and under affliction, comfort.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ WA 57^{III}.68.27f. (Heb 11:22-28) "*Haec enim est fidei natura ut supra dictum est, videre, quod non videt, et non videre, quod videt.*"

⁷⁶ LW 33.62. (*Bondage of the Will*)

The fourth is the extension from the restricted hiding place to the universal hiding place and masks. In his *First Lectures on the Psalms*, Luther identifies only five hiding places. However, in 1528, about 15 years later, Luther's understanding of the area of God's hiding is extended to all the people and all creatures as he writes: "God is a supernatural, inscrutable Being who resides simultaneously and entirely in every kernel of grain and still is in all and above all and outside all creatures."⁷⁸ This means that God is only in one single spot and everywhere at the same time. This development of the idea came from his understanding of God's mode of existence—God's immanence of God in all creatures.

The fifth is that God's hiding place is converted into the concept of mask. The hiding place means where we cannot see. Therefore, this idea of hiding is naturally connected with the idea of wearing a mask since masks prevent us from seeing God. Luther calls the Incarnation, Church, and Sacraments God's mask. Just as God's hiding place becomes universal, so God's masks become universal. God hides himself behind masks of varied phases and forms:

He Himself acts through us, and we are only His masks behind which He conceals Himself and performs all in all, as is well known to us Christians.⁷⁹

It may surely be said that the course of the world and especially the life of His saints is God's disguise in which He hides Himself and reigns and busies Himself so wonderfully in the world.⁸⁰

These early ideas of the hidden God, sketched in his *First Lectures on the Psalms*, are extended and developed in the successive editions of his commentaries. In the progress,

⁷⁷ LW 4.7. (Gen 21:1-3, 1539)

⁷⁸ WA 26.339.34. (*Vom Abendmahl Christi* 1528), quoted in H. Bornkamm, *Luther's World of Thought*, trans. Martin H. Bertram (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1965), 58.

⁷⁹ WA 23.8.36. (*Vorrede zu Lichtenbergers Weissagung* 1527): "Wie wol ers doch selbs durch uns, und wir nur seine larven sind, under wilcher er sich verbirget und alles inn alle in allen wircht, wie wir Christen das wol wissen", quoted in H Bornkamm, *Luther's World of Thought*, 60.

⁸⁰ WA 15.373.7. (Psalm 127:1)

this initial idea of the five hiding places comes to be more systemized and developed into five masks: nature, the Bible, the Incarnation, the Cross, and the Word and the Sacraments, which we will discuss here in consequence.

3. The Masks of God

Out of the myriads of masks in Luther's works, there are five central masks: nature, the Bible, the Incarnation, the Cross, and the Word and Sacraments. It is natural to count the Incarnation and the Word and Sacraments among them, in that they are not only significant in the concept of the mask, but also included in the initial five hiding places which we have already explored. In Luther's theology, nature and the Bible are two symmetrical focal points of God's revelation. Their theological significance will be clearer if we just consider Luther's effort to explain their symmetrical reality with the special terms such as general and proper knowledge of God, and knowing about God and knowing God.⁸¹ The Cross is the most obvious mask of God where God's hiddenness and revelation overlap in the climax. Walther von Loewenich expresses this point in an obvious way, "For Luther the Cross is not only the subject of theology; it is a distinctive mark of all theology. The Cross of Christ is the center that provides perspective for all theological statements."⁸² Therefore, we get the five masks — nature, the Bible, the Incarnation, the Cross, and the Word and Sacraments. These five take on different styles and aspects, yet working in harmony to faithfully perform all the theological roles and functions allotted to the mask in Luther's framework of the hidden God. We are going to turn our attention to these five masks in more detail because of their significance in Luther's doctrine of the hidden God.

⁸¹ Cf. Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, 15-19.

⁸² Loewenich, *Luther's Theology of the Cross*, 18.

First, God reveals himself in the universe. According to Luther, “All creation is the most beautiful book or Bible; in it God has described and portrayed Himself.”⁸³ The various phenomena of nature point to the presence of God. The clouds are on the wing like birds; they are God’s pinions. A thunderstorm is like the ‘eternal prophets,’ talking about the terrors of God’s law in our conscience even in this time of Grace. The spring dew at the dawn of day is an image of the Holy Spirit, who delights in creating Christians. The red morning sky resembles the comforting, joyful proclamation of the Gospel. A mild breeze becomes another image of the Gospel, which melts the icy winter of the heart.⁸⁴ All nature is full of the revelatory signs of God’s presence and his glory, beauty and power. God has His being in every tree and leaf, in fire, in water, in stone. Luther connects God’s omnipresence in his creatures to the work of his Divine power to create and preserve:

If he is to create or preserve it, however, he must be present and must make and preserve his creation both in its innermost and outermost aspects. Therefore, indeed, he himself must be present in every single creature in its innermost and outermost being, on all sides, through and through, below and above, before and behind, so that nothing can be more truly present and within all creatures than God himself with his power.⁸⁵

Second, God hides himself in the Bible in order to reveal himself. Luther usually insists that God is to be understood as “clothed in the Word”. No one had known the Divine will until the Word was made flesh and proclaimed this to us.⁸⁶ Luther uses an interesting illustration in order to explain the role of the Bible in revealing God’s will toward us. Even if we see what a person does outwardly, we cannot see his intentions and

⁸³ WA 48.201.5. (*Sprüche aus dem Neuen Testament, Röm 1:20*): “*Creatura tota est pulcherrimus liber seu biblia, in quibus Deus sese descripsit et depinxit,...*”

⁸⁴ Quoted in Heinrich Bornkamm, *Luther’s World of Thought*, 179. Here Bornkamm refers to WA 41.163.4 (Sermon. May 29, 1535); WA 31¹.328f. (Psalm 25 (1530)); 41.163-4. (Sermon (May 29, 1535)); Table Talk 3, 3507.

⁸⁵ WA 23.133. = LW 37.57f. (This is My Body)

⁸⁶ Cf. WA 46.544.3-10; LW 22.9. (John 1:1, 1537)

thoughts. We cannot know what he thinks unless, by “word or sign” by which Luther means the Bible, God enables us to understand it.⁸⁷ Thus Scripture is the place where God is hidden for the purpose of revelation. More positively, Luther describes the Old Testament as some hiding mask of Christ: “Here (Scripture) you will find the swaddling cloths and the manger in which Christ lies...Simply and lowly are these swaddling cloths, but dear is the treasure, Christ, who lies in them.”⁸⁸ The gospel is both hidden and contained in the Old Testament, waiting to be illuminated by the “star of Bethlehem”—namely “the new light, preaching and the gospel, oral and public preaching.”⁸⁹ In *The Bondage of the Will*, Luther mentions that the revelation in the Bible is somewhat masked. Though Luther says that in the Bible, “the profoundest mysteries of the supreme Majesty are no more hidden away, but are now brought out of doors and displayed to public view”,⁹⁰ he acknowledges that to many people, a great deal remains obscure. For the mask is not in the Bible, but on their heart. Luther proves this point by citing Paul’s message in II Cor. 3-4. “The veil remains on their heart” [II Cor. 3:15]; “If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost whose heart the god of this world hath blinded” [II Cor. 4:3-4]. Here God’s mask is not far away. It is in our heart. God uses spiritual blindness as his mask. Luther goes so far as to say that God “veils reason” which is obtuse to decipher the heavenly spiritual secrets under the mask and fails to realize that “the Cross and suffering would achieve such incalculable results” as “the devil has been conquered, death killed and heaven opened.”⁹¹ Therefore, it is clear the revelation through the Bible is hidden to the spiritually blind by the veil of reason, but revealed to the spiritual eye of faith. Hence Luther’s characteristic maxim that “it is better to leave reason at home” and submit to

⁸⁷ WA 21.509. (*Am Sonntag Trinitatis Epistel*, Röm 11:33-36)

⁸⁸ WA 8.12.5. = LW 35.236. (Preface to the Old Testament 1545 (1523))

⁸⁹ LW 52.205. (The Gospel for the Festival of the Epiphany)

⁹⁰ LW 33.26. (*Bondage of the Will*)

⁹¹ WA 3.547.25-548.9. (Psalm 76)

Scripture; or that “even the humble miller’s maid, nay, a child of nine if it has faith”, can understand the Bible.⁹²

Third, God hides himself in the Incarnation. Christ, the eternal Word, was made flesh in order to reveal God himself to us. Luther says, “Christ is the eternal Word of God veiled in human nature.”⁹³ Here the word ‘veiled’ suggests that in his Incarnation, God is hidden in human nature. Luther describes flesh as ‘garb’ or ‘clothes’: “Who, clothed in garb of flesh and blood, dost take a manger for Thy throne, while worlds on worlds are Thine throne.”⁹⁴ It is through Christ that “we learn to look straight into the face of God.”⁹⁵ God took upon himself humanity and revealed himself in Jesus of Nazareth. For Luther, Christ is the mirror of God’s heart. In a 1537 Sermon, Luther correlates the will of Christ and the will of the Father, and “pictures God as kindly disposed to us.”⁹⁶ Therefore, “we are not to ascend to the study of the Divine Majesty before we have adequately comprehended this little infant.”⁹⁷ Luther knew well that God had given himself to be known in Jesus and that outside of him God was not to be found. Whoever seeks God outside of Christ, says Luther, actually ends up finding the devil. “Christ is the only means, and as ye would say, the glass by the which we see God, that is to say, we know His will.”⁹⁸ Thus the true knowledge of God can come only through Christ. Luther declares, “He who does not know Christ does not know God hidden in suffering.”⁹⁹

The fourth central mask is what is at heart of Luther’s theology of the Cross.¹⁰⁰ As Luther states in the Heidelberg Disputation, “In the crucified Christ is true theology and

⁹² See C Sydney, Cater, *The Reformers and Holy Scripture* (London: Chas J Thynne, 1928), 29, 66.

⁹³ *WA* 48.31.4. (Psalm 22), quoted in Gerrish, “‘To the Unknown God’: Luther and Calvin on the Hiddenness of God”, 55.

⁹⁴ Quoted in Bornkamm, *Luther’s World of Thought*, 88.

⁹⁵ *WA* 46.669-672. (John 1:18)

⁹⁶ *WA* 33.91. = *LW* 23.61-63. (John 6:38-39)

⁹⁷ *WA* 40^{III}.656. (*Enarratio capituli noni Esaiae* 9:6)

⁹⁸ Martin Luther, *A Commentary on St. Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians*, ed. Erasmus Middleton (London, 1807), 274.

⁹⁹ *LW* 31.53. (Heidelberg Disputation)

recognition of God.”¹⁰¹ To know Christ is to know the Cross and understand God under the crucified flesh. All his theology flows from the deep meaning of the Cross.¹⁰² Luther’s mature thought maintains the emphasis on his *theologia crucis*, which, as we have already seen, forms the matrix for his thought of the hidden God. Luther scholars express the centrality of the Cross in Luther’s theology in a variety of ways. Paul Althaus, for example, declares: for Luther, “...the Cross of Christ is the standard by which all genuine theology is measured...”; the *theologia crucis* is the “essence of true theology”.¹⁰³ McGrath observes, “For Luther, Christian thinking about God comes to an abrupt halt at the foot of Cross. The Christian is forced...either to seek God elsewhere or to make the Cross itself the foundation and criterion of his thought about God.”¹⁰⁴ These commentators are restatements of Luther’s own often-quoted dictum: “*Crux sola est nostra theologia*,” or “the Cross alone is our theology.”¹⁰⁵ For Luther, the Cross is the very place where God hides. The Cross is the most secret hiding place. “All good things are hidden in and under the Cross” (*Omnia bona in cruce et sub cruce abscondita sunt*).¹⁰⁶ Especially Luther remarks, “Under the Cross which we experience, eternal life lies hidden.”¹⁰⁷ On the Cross, God not only hides but also reveals himself most clearly and dramatically, in glory and majesty, but in suffering. It is only through suffering that sinners can see and come to know God.¹⁰⁸ True revelation is to be recognized in the sufferings and the Cross of Christ, rather than in human moral activity or the created order. More fundamentally, what is revealed and yet hidden in precisely such sufferings is none other than the living God, working out

¹⁰⁰ WA 5.176.32-33. (*Operationes in Psalmos* 5:12, 1519-1521).

¹⁰¹ LW 31.53. (Heidelberg Disputation)

¹⁰² Loewenich, *Luther’s Theology of the Cross*, 23.

¹⁰³ Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, 30.

¹⁰⁴ McGrath, *Luther’s Theology of the Cross*, 1.

¹⁰⁵ WA 5.176.32-33. (*Operationes in Psalmos* 5:12, 1519-1521).

¹⁰⁶ Prenter, *Luther’s Theology of the Cross*, vi.

¹⁰⁷ LW 29.10-11. (Titus and Philemon)

¹⁰⁸ Forde, *On Being a Theologian of the Cross*, 86.

the salvation of those whom he loves.¹⁰⁹

The fifth mask is the Word and Sacraments. In the previous discussion of Luther's development, we emphasised the connection between the hidden God and the Eucharist and explained that Sacraments are where God reveals himself and hides himself at the same time.¹¹⁰ This time we attempt to take this connection to a deeper level. The Sacraments are God-given signs in which God himself is present and active. The Sacraments are not empty signs, but concrete and tangible signs. Christ does not just sit in heaven.¹¹¹ As Bornkamm indicates, for Luther, Christ participates in God's omnipresence. That is, Christ—His Divine nature and His human nature which are inseparable—exists literally as a vibrant and vigorous force in every creature.¹¹² However, Christ can only be found where he has promised that he will be found: in the Word and Sacraments. Bornkamm describes the general concept of Luther: "Sacrament and Word are identical in substance; the sacrament is a sign in which God is effective; it emanates from God, and it points to God."¹¹³ Above all, Luther insists that a Sacrament is a 'sign of the Divine will' and a 'sign of eternal salvation for those who believed'.¹¹⁴ In this sign, God reveals himself and we must take hold of him.¹¹⁵ Thus it is called an 'epiphany' of God.¹¹⁶ Luther advises those who disparage baptism not to regard baptism according to its external mask (*larva*), but attend to how "God's Word is enclosed" in it.¹¹⁷ Luther believes that he felt and tasted Christ in the gift of the Last Supper. Sacraments are the signposts to lead us to the assurance of our ultimate salvation accomplished through Christ on the Cross. In his

¹⁰⁹ Prenter, *Luther's Theology of the Cross*, vi.

¹¹⁰ See the above Chapter I.2. "The Development of the Hidden God in Luther's Theology and His Work".

¹¹¹ The relation between Sacraments and the Body of Christ will be discussed in comparison with Calvin in the conclusion of this chapter.

¹¹² Bornkamm, *Luther's World of Thought*, 113.

¹¹³ Ibid. 106.

¹¹⁴ LW 3.110. (Gen 17:3-6)

¹¹⁵ LW 3.108. (Gen 17:3-6)

¹¹⁶ LW 3.110. (Gen 17:3-6)

¹¹⁷ *Book of Concord*, 439, quoted in Lohse, *Martin Luther's Theology*, 301.

memorable “Sermon on Preparation for dying (1519)”, Luther declares that the Sacrament is “a visible sign of the Divine mind, to which one must cling with firm faith as to the good staff with which the patriarch Jacob walked through the Jordan, or a lantern by which one must be guided and on which one must diligently fix one’s eyes on the dark path of death, sin, and hell.”¹¹⁸

4. How the Hidden God Works in the Mask: *Abscondita sub Contrariis*

We have already examined in the viewpoint of a historical development that God’s paradoxical way of working under the opposite and his *opus alienum and opus suum*, briefly outlined in the *First Lectures on the Psalms*, is a consistently recurring and continually developing theme throughout his work.¹¹⁹ We need to develop it more because of its significance of the special way that the hidden God works. There are several points here.

First, the way the hidden God works in the mask is described by the term *abscondita sub contrariis*, which means that God’s work is hidden under the contrary. God’s strength is hidden under apparent weakness; his wisdom under apparent folly; and his life under apparent death. God’s mercy is latent under his wrath; his eternal Divinity in the frail form of humanity; and the future glory of the Christian under the present suffering.

It is clear that these are hidden inside, but more amazingly, that they are hidden under the form of the opposite (*sub contrario suo abscondita sunt*). So whoever totally humiliates himself in the eyes of the world (*coram mundo*) is totally exalted in the sight of God (*coram Deo*).¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ WA 2.692.37ff. (Sermons on Preparation, 1519)

¹¹⁹ See the above Chapter I.2. “The Development of the Hidden God in Luther’s Theology and His Work.”

¹²⁰ WA 4.449.35-7. (Psalm 144, 1513-16): “*Et parum est, quod intus in abscondito hec sunt, sed mirabilis, quod sub contrario suo abscondita sunt. Quia humiliatus nimis coram mundo est exaltatus nimis coram Deo, etc.*”

Second, the notion of *abscondita sub contrariis* is related to God's paradoxical way of working (*opus alienum* and *opus suum* – God does his proper work through his alien work.)

Thus when God makes alive he does it by killing, when he justifies he does it by making men guilty, when he exalts to heaven, he does it by bringing down to hell, as Scripture says: “The Lord kills and brings to life; he brings down to Sheol and raises up (1 Sam. 2:6)...¹²¹

This paradoxical aspect of *abscondita sub contrariis* is most typically demonstrated in the mysterious and dialectic way God justifies sinners—doing his *opus proprium* (proper work) through his *opus alienum* (strange work). Luther uses the term *opus alienum Dei*, God's alien work, to describe this Divine initiative that empowered sinners, in faith, to throw themselves helplessly on God's mercy. Before they can be justified, they must be utterly humiliated. God humiliates people, in order that he may justify them; he makes them sinners, in order that he may make them righteous.¹²² Here, God's making people righteous belongs to “God's proper work”. It follows that “an action which is alien to God's nature (*opus alienum Dei*) results in a deed belonging to his very nature (*opus proprium Dei*).”¹²³ The sinners must surrender their every claim to self-justification and fly instead for refuge to the Cross where Christ suffered on our behalf. Unless we are “brought low, reduced to nothing through the Cross and suffering”,¹²⁴ we cannot receive God's justifying grace.

¹²¹ LW 33.62. (*Bondage of the Will*)

¹²² What Luther means here is that God makes people realize that they are helpless sinners before the law.

¹²³ LW 31.51. (Heidelberg Disputation).

¹²⁴ LW 31.55. (Heidelberg Disputation).

Third, the notion of *abscondita sub contrariis* is also related to the distinction between God's and the world's perspective.

...the hidden things are those which, humanly speaking, are openly carried on and which lie open in the view of men. These are the things that are *something in the eyes of the world but are nothing in the eyes of God*, as I Cor. 1:27 says: "He has chosen the weak things of the world." On this account he adds *here I will appear in Thy sight in righteousness* (v. 15) "where not Thy hidden things but Thy bright things are." Therefore, what is hidden before God is clear before the world, and *vice versa*.¹²⁵

The sharp contrast between God's perspective and the world's perspective is crucial for Luther's understanding of God's hiddenness: "*something in the eyes of the world but are nothing in the eyes of God*", because it makes God's hiddenness in his revelation possible. God reveals himself. The God who revealed himself clearly is hidden to the worldly perspective. He is visible only to those with God's perspective through faith with the help of the Holy Spirit. In the eyes of the world, certainly the appalling spectacle of crucifixion outside the city wall will not be glorious or beautiful, and the way of the Cross looks foolish, but, in the eye of God it is full of glory, beauty, and wisdom. In the eyes of the world, "God's faithfulness and truth must always first become a great lie, before it becomes the truth. For in the sight of the world it is known as heresy."¹²⁶ However, unlike what the eye of the world sees, God is faithful and true. "Thus even to ourselves it always seems as though God wishes to abandon us and not keep his Word, and that he is beginning to be a liar in our hearts,"¹²⁷ but God does not abandon us, and keeps his Word. These two different perspectives are the crucial key to understanding the relation between God hidden and revealed, and the core of Luther's idea of "*abscondita sub contrariis*" throughout his

¹²⁵ LW 10.112. (Psalm 17:14)

¹²⁶ WA 31¹.249.16-250.1.(Psalm 117, 1530)

¹²⁷ Ibid.

whole theology.

Fourth, Luther's views on *abscondita sub contrariis* and two different perspectives make a contribution to Luther's theology of humility as the key to find God's righteousness. McGrath indicates that Luther has arrived at the fundamental insight of theology of humility by late 1514: "the proper disposition of justification is humility". One step further, in 1515, Luther insists that the *humilita fidei* is not our work, but God's gracious work in man: before God can raise us to the heights, we must first be forced to descend to the depths; before we can be elevated by God, we must first be humiliated; before we can be saved, we must first be damned; before we can live in the spirit, we must first be put to death in the flesh.¹²⁸

Fifth, God's paradoxical way of working – *abscondita sub contrariis* – as the core of Luther's doctrine of the hidden God not only represents his view of God, but also characterizes his theology. David Tracy comments that the concealment of revelation under its opposite is "the heart of Luther's original insight into God".¹²⁹ It speaks of Luther's view of the nature of God: "It is God's nature first to destroy and bring to nothing whatever is in us before he gives us of his own."¹³⁰ Especially, in his *Commentary on Romans*, Luther defines God as "a negative essence and goodness and wisdom and righteousness, who cannot be possessed or touched except by the negation of all our affirmatives."¹³¹ McGrath claims that this paradoxical way of working— *abscondita sub contrariis*— is "an essential feature of both the *theologia crucis* and the earlier theological breakthrough".¹³² Gerhard Ebeling evaluates it as "a theme that dominates everything which Luther has to say concerning faith, justification and the new life, the Holy Spirit and the Church".¹³³ At

¹²⁸ McGrath, *Luther's Theology of the Cross*, 153.

¹²⁹ Tracy, "The Hidden God: The Divine Other of Liberation", 9.

¹³⁰ *WA* 56.375. (*Diui Pauli apostoli ad Romanos Epistola, Die Scholien* 8:26)

¹³¹ *LW* 25.383. (Rom. 9:3, 1516)

¹³² McGrath, *Luther's Theology of the Cross*, 159.

¹³³ Gerhard Ebeling, *Luther: An Introduction to His Thought*, 238.

the same time, this represents God's consideration for our human nature. Therefore, Luther expresses the purpose of this paradoxical way of working is that "he makes us capable of receiving his gifts and his works."¹³⁴

5. Hiding to Reveal: The Nature of the Mask and Its Function

God lowers himself to the level of our weak comprehension and presents himself to us in images, coverings, as it were, in simplicity adapted to a child, that in some measure it may be possible for him to be known by us.¹³⁵

God wants to hide himself in various kinds of masks as we have seen in the case of nature, the Incarnation, the Cross, the Bible, and the Word and Sacrament. In Luther's doctrine of the hidden God, the mask is not a simple mask. The mask is the key to making hiddenness and revelation possible. Therefore, it is no exaggeration to say that Luther's view of the mask is a prerequisite for a proper understanding of his doctrine of God hidden and revealed.

For Luther, the mask is the way of God's accommodation. Following Augustine, Luther believes that God accommodates Himself to human capacity.

"We know no other God than the God clothed with his promises. If he should speak to me in his majesty, I would run away—just as the Jews did. However, when he is clothed in the voice of man and *accommodates himself to our capacity to understand*, I can approach him."¹³⁶

In this context, Luther speaks in support of Anthropomorphists. Luther strongly opposed the papal decree to condemn the Anthropomorphists as heretical because they spoke of

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ *WA* 42.294-295. = *LW* 2.45. (Gen 6:5-6)

¹³⁶ *WA* 40^{II}.329 f. (Psalm 51:1) Cf. *LW* 12.312 f. (Psalm 51:1) [Italics mine]

God as they would of a man, and attributed to him eyes, ears, a mouth, a noise, hands, and feet.¹³⁷ Luther argues that this condemnation is totally unjust, on the ground that otherwise our nature would not be able to understand the spiritual reality of God. Besides, Luther indicates that the Bible itself uses this method: as we read in Isa. 6:1 “he (Isaiah) saw God sitting on a throne in heaven.” Luther considers these figurative expressions as veils or wrappers, and maintains that this method is approved by the Holy Spirit.¹³⁸ God puts before us images of Himself, because he shows himself to us in such a manner that we can grasp him. In the Old Testament, God appeared in images as mercy seats, the ark, the tabernacle, the pillars of cloud and fire, etc, in the New Testament, “Baptism, the Lord’s Supper, absolution, and the ministry of Word”.¹³⁹ All these forms, actions, emotions, and symbols have some intention to serve to show consideration for our limited human perception.¹⁴⁰ Therefore, we may assent that the mask is the best way of self-revelation of God which an all-knowing God invented deftly so that he may be well accommodated and well adjusted to the limited human capacity.

The mask’s primary function is to hide God. As we have already seen, God uses masks to hide himself for several reasons: to hide his too glorious majesty; to accommodate humanity’s limited comprehension; to make room for faith; to judge the world wisdom, which is so proud but which fails to find the real God. The mask basically refers to ‘something for hiding’:

What else is all our work to God—whether in the fields, in the garden, in the city, in the house, in war, or in government—but just such a child’s performance, by which He wants to give His gifts in the fields, at home, and everywhere else? These are masks of God,

¹³⁷ LW 1.14. (Gen 1:2). Epiphanius, in his *Panarion*, Chapter 70, tells of a sect called “Audians”. They were accused of teaching a gross form of anthropomorphis.

¹³⁸ LW 1.15. (Gen 1:2c)

¹³⁹ LW 2.46. (Gen 6:5, 6)

¹⁴⁰ LW 2.45-46. (Gen 6:5, 6)

behind which *He wants to remain concealed* and do all things.”¹⁴¹

However, the crux of my argument is that the understanding of God’s mask just as “for hiding” is not enough. Luther does not want us to confine the mask within a routine and hackneyed concept of “a means to hide God”. The masks, *larvae Dei*, entail another and more resilient and significant meaning: to reveal God to our finite humanity. In Luther’s deeper understanding of the mask, the mask is not just a veil, but also a mirror that reveals God and Divine revelation. A more concrete case is Christ, the most prominent mask of God. Luther calls him the mirror of the fatherly heart.¹⁴² Luther’s image of the “mirror” is emphatically repeated in the *Lectures on Galatians*: “Christ alone is the means, the life, and the *mirror* through which we see God and know His will.”¹⁴³ Here, Luther’s emphasis is put on “to reveal” rather than “to hide”. This is clear, considering the purpose of the mask is to reveal God, as Luther states that “the human being hides his own things to deny them; God hides his own things to reveal them.”¹⁴⁴ In some aspect, it speaks of a paradoxical truth that God can be best revealed when he is hidden.

Therefore, I am critical of the view of Heinrich Bornkamm who emphasises the distinction between God and his mask. He insists:

Whatever we can behold with our eyes in nature and in history is only the mask of God, only earthly phenomena. In nature we witness blossoming and withering, growth and decay; in history we see victor and vanquished, bane and blessing, rise and fall. But who

¹⁴¹ *WA* 31¹.436. = *LW* 14.114. (Psalm 147:13) [Italics mine]

¹⁴² “The Large Catechism”. Here Luther says, “We could never recognize the Father’s grace and mercy except for our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the mirror of the Father’s heart.” Cf. *WA* 18.782-3. = *LW* 33.286. (*Bondage of the Will*).

¹⁴³ *LW* 26.396. (Gal 4:8-9); Cf. Martin Luther, *A Commentary on St. Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians*, ed. Erasmus Middleton (London, 1896), 274. In the same context, Christ is the “glass” to reveal God’s will: “Christ is the only mean, and as ye would say, the glass by which we see God, that is to say, we know His will.”

¹⁴⁴ *WA* 1.138.13-15. = *LW* 51.26. (Sermon on Matthew’s Day, Matt 11:25-30, Feb 24, 1517): “*Homo abscondit sua at negat, Deus abscondit sua at revelet.*”

hides behind all these masks?¹⁴⁵

Bornkamm focusses on the concealing functions of God's mask rather than its revelatory function.

The many people who assume that God reveals himself in nature and history are *mistaken*. He is present there, but he is concealed. We behold his mask there but not his countenance. We are aware of his might, but we do not learn his will. We feel his breath, but we do not look into his heart. Luther said very fittingly: "Therefore we are skilled to distinguish between God and his mask. The world is not able to do this." Whoever supposes that he grasp God in nature or in history with his hands, as it were, confuses God with his masks and does not differentiate between these.¹⁴⁶

Here, Bornkamm's statement can be criticized on several grounds. First, when Luther said, "the world is not able to do this", which refers to the distinction between God and his mask, "the world" refers to unbelievers who have reason, not faith. Gerrish says that in Luther, "world" and "reason" are interchangeable in many passages, and he switches from one to the other without any difference in meaning.¹⁴⁷ However, Bornkamm interprets the world as referring to not only unbelievers but also believers, saying "Whoever supposes that he grasps God in nature or in history with his hands, as it were, confuses God with his masks and does not differentiate between these." Second, Bornkamm insists that the assumption that God reveals himself in nature and history are *mistaken*. However, Luther continually says that God reveals himself in nature and history. This is most obvious in remarks he wrote in a volume of Pliny in his last year, "All creation is the most beautiful book or Bible; in it God has described and portrayed Himself."¹⁴⁸ For Luther, the purpose of all

¹⁴⁵ Bornkamm, *Luther's World of Thought*, 61-62

¹⁴⁶ Ibid. 68. [Italics mine]

¹⁴⁷ Gerrish, *Grace and Reason*, 13. Here Gerrish takes for example the postil for Epiphany Sunday, on Isa 60:1-6.

¹⁴⁸ WA 48. 201, 5. (*Sprüche aus dem Neuen Testament*, Röm 1.20): "*Creatura tota est pulcherrimus liber seu biblia, in quibus Deus sese de scripsit et depinxit.*"

kinds of masks is to reveal God.¹⁴⁹ Third, Bornkamm insists that we can see God's mask, but we cannot see God in the mask of nature or history. However, Luther claims that the principle is that God's mask is hidden to reason, but revealed to faith. This is a principle with which even Bornkamm would not dissent because he himself says in another passage of his: "God is concealed from the blind, but to the seeing he is revealed."¹⁵⁰ Fourth, Bornkamm's view that the mask is nothing but illusion and deception or a kind of block to keep us from seeing God inside can be interpreted as just belittling the worth of the mask. However, Luther clearly thinks highly of the mask because it is not only a mask to hide but also a mirror in which we are able to see God's hidden reality.

Luther's masks belong to not "the will of the good pleasure", but the "will of sign", as mentioned before.¹⁵¹ We should turn our eyes away from "the will of pleasure", referring to the essential will of God or His unveiled majesty.¹⁵² Therefore, God who fully understands our limited weakness likes to indicate it through some coverings: Baptism, the Word, and the Sacrament of the Altar.

In my evaluation, the image of a filter presumably will be fitting and useful to explain the function of Luther's mask.¹⁵³ In a sense, revelation is possible because of the peculiar characteristics of the mask God wears: filtering. There are two kinds of perceptions: the perception of reason and that of faith. God's mask completely distinguishes between the perception of reason and that of faith. Both perceptions cannot penetrate the mask. The mask completely filters the former out and transmits the latter.¹⁵⁴ It is a kind of selective work. This is well expressed in Luther's remark:

¹⁴⁹ WA 1.138.13-15. (*Homo abscondit sua at negat, Deus abscondit sua at revelet.*) = LW 51.26. (Sermon on Matthew's Day, Matt 11:25-30, Feb 24, 1517)

¹⁵⁰ Bornkamm, *Luther's World of Thought*, 71.

¹⁵¹ See the above Chapter I.2. "The Development of the Hidden God in Luther's Theology and His Work".

¹⁵² LW 33.140. (*Bondage of the Will*)

¹⁵³ The images of 'veil' or 'clothes' were already widely used in the 16 C, but, during the period, the word, filter, just began to be used. It originated from 16 C *filtre*, from Medieval Latin *filtrum* piece of felt used as a filter, of Germanic origin. Cf. *Collins Concise Dictionary* (Glasgow: HarperCollins Publishers, 2001), 536.

¹⁵⁴ See diagram 5 in Chapter V.8.c. "Three Kinds of Light", below.

Who would have thought that the Cross and suffering would achieve such incalculable results...? Faith understands that the devil has been conquered, death killed and heaven opened, but reason does not know it. He *has veiled these works* under the weakness of suffering, as he has his deity under his humanity so that by faith *he might also veil reason* and make foolish the wisdom of the world.¹⁵⁵

God uses the masks of “the weakness of suffering” to filter out (block) the sight of reason. This filtering out is accomplished by “veiling these works” and “veiling reason”. This process takes place in both ways—inwardly and outwardly by the Holy Spirit.¹⁵⁶ How does the Holy Spirit veil these works and reason? In Luther’s theology, it is done by the Holy Spirit’s inaction, not action (here inaction means that the Holy Spirit does not do the work of “opening their closed eye”). What our reason can see on the Cross is just the weakness of suffering, that is, a man dying in apparent weakness and folly, under the wrath of God. This is the mere mask of God. The wisdom and power and victory and salvation revealed in the Cross are completely hidden to the eye of reason. Only faith understands the spiritual reality hidden under the Cross and suffering: “the devil has been conquered, death killed and heaven opened.” It is the mask of God which blocks the light of reason, but lets the light of faith through.

Another distinguished function of the mask not much known to us is to play God’s instruments for judgement. The mask’s filtering function enables the mask to be the instrument of God’s judgement, since the filtering process has the effect of distinguishing between the believer and the unbeliever. The mask as we see it in the concealment of the crucified God is an offense to reason, but becomes for the believer the abrogation of all his own wisdom and righteousness. In a sense, we can say that the masks become, “for believers”, the place for faith, while they are for unbelievers the occasion for blasphemy:

¹⁵⁵ WA 3.547.25-548.9. (Psalm 76:21), quoted in Graham Tomlin, *The Power of the Cross*, 156. [Italics mine]

“Unbelief makes a judge and enemy out of God and the Father...Faith makes a God and Father out of enemy and judge.”¹⁵⁷ Luther clearly characterizes this judging function of the mask as “a stumbling block”: “The Word of the Cross is a stumbling block to the Jew, and foolishness to the Gentile (1 Cor. 1:18, 23), because it is utterly *hidden* from their eyes. It is withdrawn from their eyes and is taught in hiddenness.”¹⁵⁸

Luther recognizes that God allows his masks to be his created agents to achieve his work. A famous aphorism from Luther is that “all creatures are God’s masks and disguises”¹⁵⁹ Not only nature, but also persons are God’s mask. In his *Lectures on Galatians*, Luther states, “the magistrate, the emperor, the king, the prince, the consul, the teacher, the preacher, the pupil, the father, the children, the master, the servant, all these are social positions or external masks (*larvae*).”¹⁶⁰ They serve God as ‘His instruments by whom He governs and preserves the world.’¹⁶¹ They are God’s *larvae* that he assumes in order to do his work. Luther regards those proclaiming the gospel as “only a mask and a masquerade through which God carries out his work and will”.¹⁶² In a similar context, in his *Large Catechism*, Luther calls God’s creation “the hands, channels, and the instruments, the means through which God bestows all blessings on us, just as He gives the mother breasts and milk for her child, and as He lets corn and all manner of plants grow on the earth for our food—blessings which no creature can create for itself.”¹⁶³ In the playground of history, God himself “acts through us, and we are only His mask behind which He conceals

¹⁵⁶ See the below Chapter.V. 7. “The Relation between the Holy Spirit and the Hidden God”.

¹⁵⁷ WA 14.633-4. = LW 9.96-97. (Deut 8:19)

¹⁵⁸ *Lectures on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, ed. James Atkinson, *The Library of Christian Classics*, 16 (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962), 233-34. (Heb 12:11)

¹⁵⁹ WA 17^{II}.192. = *Sermons of Martin Luther*. 8 vols. ed. John Nicholas Lenker (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker House, 1988), vol. II, 141 (Sunday in *Invocavit*, Matth 4:1ff.). Hereafter abbreviated as *Sermons*.

¹⁶⁰ LW 26.95. (Gal 2:6)

¹⁶¹ LW 26.96. (Gal 2:6)

¹⁶² WA 17^{II}.262. (*Festpostille: Evangelium am Andreastage* Matt 4:18-24)

¹⁶³ WA 30^I.136. = *Luther’s Primary Works*, ed. Henry Wace and C.A.Buchheim (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1896), 37-8 (The Larger Catechism). Hereafter abbreviated into *Luther’s Primary Works*.

Himself and performs all in all, as is well known to us Christians.”¹⁶⁴ There is cooperation between God and his masks. God allows them to work with him and help him create all sorts of things—even though he could and does create without their cooperation.¹⁶⁵ However, as Bernard Lohse comments, this does not deny that the final worker is God alone. God uses creatures in order to remain hidden.¹⁶⁶ That is, the real worker is not the mask, but God. As Luther puts it, “You are not the ones who are catching the fish, God says, I am drawing the net myself.”¹⁶⁷ Besides, this means that the scope of God’s work is extended to the whole creation: “God’s activity is thus not limited to extraordinary events or ‘miracles,’ but is behind all occurrences in nature and history, as well as in individual life.”¹⁶⁸

Watson’s contribution in his understanding of Luther’s mask is his view that Luther’s God uses his masks to directly confront man.¹⁶⁹ Watson borrowed the terms of Baillie in order to explain how the directness of this confrontation can be maintained in spite of the presence of masks: “mediated immediacy”.¹⁷⁰ Watson explains this concept: “We do not reach God by inferring His existence, nature, and attributes from his masks and veils, but God Himself comes to meet us in them—none other than the God who meets us in Christ.” It is true that, though the mask is the indirect medium to reveal God, the mask jumps over the mere function of revelation into real confrontation with God: “Under the wrapper (masks) you will be sure to take hold of me.”¹⁷¹ However, we cannot experience Divine confrontation in all masks of God, only in some special masks such as the Word, because “He is everywhere, but He does not want you to feel after Him everywhere, but where the

¹⁶⁴ WA 23.8.36. (*Vorrede zu Johannis Lichtenbergers Weissagung*, 1527)

¹⁶⁵ WA 17^{II}.192. = *Sermons* II, 141. (Sunday in *Invocavit*, Matth 4:1ff.).

¹⁶⁶ Bernard Lohse, *Martin Luther’s Theology*, 213.

¹⁶⁷ WA 17^{II}.262 f. (*Festpostille: Evangelium am Andreastage* Matth 4:18-24)

¹⁶⁸ Lohse, *Martin Luther’s Theology*, 213.

¹⁶⁹ Philip S. Watson, *Let God be God* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1947), 80.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid. Cf. J. Baillie, *Our Knowledge of God* (London: Oxford University Press, 1939), 178ff. 196.

¹⁷¹ LW 1.15. (Gen 1:2)

Word is; there do thou feel after Him, then thou wilt rightly lay hold of Him.”¹⁷² We can safely conclude that God does not wait for humans to find him, but actively seeks confrontation in order to reveal himself.

6. How the Hidden God Exists in the Mask

Our next question is how the hidden God exists in the masks. This speaks of the relation of God and his mask and a certain facet of the relation between the hidden God and revealed God in terms of its existential aspect.¹⁷³ Luther describes God as immanent in creation as its living breath, its real life. “His Divine being can be wholly and entirely in all creatures and in every single individual being, more deeply, more inwardly, more present than creature itself”,¹⁷⁴ and “nothing can be more truly present and within all creatures than God himself with his power.”¹⁷⁵ At the same time, God is not only immanent in the mask but also transcends it, because he “may and can be circumscribed nowhere and in no being, so that he actually embraces all things and is in all, but no one being circumscribes him and is in him.”¹⁷⁶ Therefore, Luther says, “God is a supernatural inscrutable Being who resides simultaneously and entirely in every kernel of grain and still is in all and above all and outside all creatures.”¹⁷⁷ This paradoxical coexistence of immanence and transcendence is well expressed in the following paradoxical phrase, written by way of attacking Zwingli’s denial of the real presence of Christ’s body and blood “in, with, and under” the elements of the Lord’s Supper:

¹⁷² WA 19.492.

¹⁷³ A more comprehensive investigation on the relation between the hidden God and the revealed God will be in Part C.

¹⁷⁴ LW 37.60. (*This is My Body*)

¹⁷⁵ LW 37.58. (*This is My Body*)

¹⁷⁶ LW 37.60. (*This is My Body*)

¹⁷⁷ WA 26.339.34. (*Vom Abendmahl Christi Bekenntnis*, 1528)

Nothing is so small but God is still smaller, nothing so large but God is still larger, nothing is so short but God is still shorter, nothing so long but God is still longer, nothing is so broad but God is still broader, nothing so narrow but God is still narrower, etc. He is inexpressible being, above and beyond all that can be described or imagined.¹⁷⁸

God is in everything and at the same time outside of everything. God is actively present in all creation and completely enters into it. But God's Divine nature still is not consumed in the reality of the world. God continues to transcend the world.

Luther interprets this peculiar mode of God's simultaneous immanence and transcendence in three ways. First, it reflects the inherent Divine nature of God—omnipresence. God is not restricted in just one place, but he is present everywhere at the same time. If God is everywhere, he is not only in creation but also out of creation, that is, he is immanent in it and transcends it. In his *Confession concerning Christ's Supper*, Luther uses the metaphor of broken pieces of a mirror to explain the omnipresence of God. "If a mirror were broken into a thousand pieces, nevertheless the same complete image which had appeared previously in the whole mirror would remain in each piece."¹⁷⁹ This explains how the same Christ can exist at the same time in heaven and in the bread and everywhere. Second, it is characteristic of God's power. In his objection to the fanatics' interpretation of "God's right hand" as a specific place in which a body must or may be, such as on a golden throne, Luther insists that it is "the almighty power of *God*, which at one and the same time can be nowhere and yet must be everywhere."¹⁸⁰ The power of God "cannot be so determined and measured, for it is uncircumscribed and immeasurable, beyond and above all that is or may be."¹⁸¹ Third, it is required for God's basic obligation to create and preserve his all creation. It is a "must" for God to be present at all places.

¹⁷⁸ LW 37.228. (*Confession Concerning Christ's Supper*, 1528)

¹⁷⁹ LW 37.266. (*Confession Concerning Christ's Supper*, 1528)

¹⁸⁰ LW 37.57. (*This is My Body*, 1527)

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

God creates, effects, and preserves all creation through his almighty power and right hand. However, God does not dispatch any officials or angels when he creates and preserves something. All this is God's work. Then it follows that "if he is to create or preserve it, however, he must be present and must make and preserve his creation both in his *inmost and outmost* aspects."¹⁸² This relation between God and creation exactly applies to the relation between God and the mask in that God uses all creation as his mask. The relation can be simply expressed: God is in the mask, but he is not circumscribed by it, but rather transcends it because of his Divine nature, power, and obligation to create and preserve his creation.

For Luther, this distinction is significant: the mask is not God. It should not be adored as God. He clearly distinguishes God from his mask, by saying, "Therefore, we are skilled to distinguish between God and his mask. The world is not able to do this."¹⁸³ He warns against confusing God and his mask and thus regarding the mask as God. In his *Commentary on Galatians*, he gives the following example. When a greedy man, who worships his belly, hears that "man does not live by bread alone, but by every Word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4), he eats the bread but fails to see God in the bread; for he sees, admires, and adores only the masks. Here, Luther identifies two fundamental processes in the confusion between God and the mask. One is to fail to see the true God behind the mask. The other is to adore the mask, or more exactly speaking, to deify mask: "He does not want us to attribute Divinity to them, that is, to fear and respect them (the masks) in such a way that we trust them and forget Him (God)."¹⁸⁴ This inevitably results in idol worship. Of course, the creature itself should be respected and acknowledged as God's creature. However, we should be careful not to replace what

¹⁸² Ibid., 37.58. [Italics mine]

¹⁸³ LW 26.95. (Gal 2:6) Cf. LW 14.114. (Psalm 147.13); LW 24.67. (John 14:10)

¹⁸⁴ LW 26.95. (Gal 2:6).

should be served with what should serve, and furthermore, Creator with creatures:

Thus God has given all His creatures that they may serve us and we may use them, not that we may serve and worship them. Therefore, let us make use of bread, wine, clothing, possessions, gold, etc. but let us not trust or glory in them. For we are to glory and trust in God alone; He alone is to be loved, feared, and honoured.¹⁸⁵

Luther is deeply concerned about misdirected philosophical and theological ideas that confuse God and his mask, trying to bridge the gap between God and creature, and thus making the creature the God to worship. Luther suggests a method for avoiding this confusion. God is in creation. Creation is in God. But God is not creation. Likewise, God is in the mask, but God is not a mask. God transcends it. This is the crucial logic for Luther in his idea of the relation between God and creation or between God and his mask. He argues that we need to be “skilled to distinguish between God and his mask”,¹⁸⁶ and humbly recognize that there is an impassable gap between God and creature.

In conclusion, the purpose of this chapter was to investigate some essential features of Hiddenness I in Luther’s thoughts. In order to reach this purpose, we had to examine several topics such as the reason God hides himself, the development of Luther’s idea of the hidden God in his works, the characteristics of the central masks, the way the hidden God works in the mask, the nature of the mask and its function, and the way the hidden God exists and works in the masks. We can summarize our findings as follows.

Luther understands that God hides himself because of the majestic and glorious nature we cannot bear, our limited and deformed understanding, and with the purpose that there may be room for faith. Luther’s idea of hiddenness is based on the matrix of his theology of the Cross. They are in an inseparable relation. In particular, both reflect God’s

¹⁸⁵ *LW* 26.96. (Gal 2:6)

¹⁸⁶ *LW* 26:95. (Gal 2:6) Cf. *LW* 14.114. (Psalm 147:13); *LW* 24.67. (John 14:10)

paradoxical way of working: the glorious God hides himself and his own things under the Cross and suffering. Besides, Luther gets some idea of the hidden God from scholasticism such as the concept *potentia absoluta* and *potentia ordinata*, or *voluntas beneplaciti* and *voluntas signi*. The idea of hiddenness developed from his early idea of the five hiding places in his *First Lectures on the Psalms* to a myriad of masks—enough to call all creation God’s mask. Among many kinds of masks, the five central masks are nature, the Bible, the Incarnation, the Cross, and the Word and Sacraments. The way the hidden God works in the mask is characterized as “*abscondita sub contrariis*”. This is deeply related to God’s paradoxical way of working called “proper work through his strange work” and the gap between God’s eye and the world’s eye. In Hiddenness I, Luther’s God hides his own things to reveal himself. For Luther, the mask is not a simple mask just to hide God. In a more positive sense, it is a mirror to reveal him, and a filter to allow only the penetration of the perspective of faith, but block that of reason. This function of filtering is related to the function of God’s judgement. At the same time, the mask becomes the place where the confrontation with God takes place. We should not belittle the worth of God and say that our view through the mask is just illusion. Luther’s message is that we can take hold of the hidden God only through the mask. At the same time Luther warns us not to fall into the adoration of the mask as if the mask were God himself. God tests our faith through a mask. If we have the true perspective of faith, God will make God and Father out of our enemy and judge. However, if we fail to have this true perception of faith and stick to the eye of reason, God will just stay a judge and enemy.¹⁸⁷ While true perspective lets us find the hidden God under the mask and his proper work under the strange work, the false perspective is deluded by God’s mask, which covers God like a “thick hide or pelt”.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁷ LW 9.96-97. (Deut 8:19)

¹⁸⁸ WA 31¹.249. = LW 14.31f.

Luther's God hidden in revelation is a familiar God to us. This God is the God living in the midst of our life. He approaches us with the Divine love for us—justifying grace flowing out of the Cross, so that whoever with faith may approach him. This love is the very object for which God hides himself in the masks. This hiddenness of God requires our faith to find the true reality in it. God's hiddenness tests our faith. However, it should be noticed that Luther's concept of Hiddenness I in the *First Lectures on the Psalms* in 1513-16 comes to meet another strand of Hiddenness II in *The Bondage of the Will* in 1525. Here, Luther introduces another line of hiddenness of the naked God without a mask. Luther is ready to lead us into some lurking dreadful hiddenness, which Gerrish calls Hiddenness II: more trembling, more powerful, more mysterious, and which cannot be melted in this image of God hidden in revelation. This God has a horrible intention to throw a part of people into eternal perdition according to his dreadful decree. However before that, we need to turn our attention from Luther's Hiddenness I to Calvin's Hiddenness I for our comparison of them. This comparison, along with the comparison of Luther and Calvin in Hiddenness II, will be very helpful for us as we proceed towards our final focus on the relation between God hidden and revealed in Luther and Calvin.

Chapter II. Hiddenness I in Calvin: God in Accommodation

The matter of the hidden God is not restricted to Luther. Though Calvin does not elaborate the hidden God as much as Luther, it does not mean that Calvin is ignorant of the matter. On the contrary, the hidden God is a serious concern in Calvin as in Luther.

Unlike Luther, Calvin's idea of the hidden God can be best understood in the frame of accommodation, which is a major theme in his theology. Nowhere in Calvin's works is accommodation treated as "the topic of a separate locus", but it is nevertheless a central principle running through his whole theology. Therefore, Edward Dowey states that, for Calvin, "this concept of accommodation...is *the horizon of Calvin's theology*."¹ The axiom that God is able to communicate with humans through human language, as McGrath indicates, is fundamental to Calvin's understanding of Christianity.²

The idea of accommodation is the most convenient theological tool to explain Calvin's idea of the hidden God in relation to us: For the sake of revelation, God accommodates to our limited capacity through wearing masks and veils. However, paradoxically, the will to reveal effectively produces some hiddenness of God because of the Divine reduction of his naked nature for the sake of our limited understanding. Accommodation means God's self-limitation. Therefore, the word, accommodation, naturally retains God's hiddenness in it. Moreover, we can use accommodation to distinguish between Hiddenness I and Hiddenness II. God hidden in accommodation refers to Hiddenness I, and God hidden beyond accommodation to Hiddenness II.

In this chapter, we intend to examine the hidden God in accommodation. For this purpose, in Sections 1 and 2, we will explore why God accommodates himself and what

¹ Dowey, *The Knowledge of God in Calvin's Theology*, 17. [Italics mine]

² Alister E. McGrath, *A Life of John Calvin* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 129.

human capacity God considers in accommodation. In Section 3, we will ask how Calvin employs the concept of accommodation in his theology. Here the main question is whether we can say that accommodation is Calvin's own invention, and if not, what is the background of Calvin's accommodation? Besides, we will discuss the relation between humanistic rhetoric and accommodation. In Section 4, we will survey five modes of accommodation: nature, Scripture, the Incarnation, the Cross, and the Word and Sacraments as the symmetrical counterparts of Luther's mask. In Section 5, we will explore what strategy God employs so that he may get over our limited capacity. In Section 6, we will deal with the function of modes of accommodation to adjust God's reality to human capacity. In Section 7, we will discuss five key concepts to reveal the way the hidden God exists in modes of accommodation. Finally, in Section 8, we will examine the similarity and difference between accommodation and the idol.

1. Why does God Accommodate Himself?

In this section, we will attempt to answer why God accommodate himself. Fundamentally for Calvin, these questions are anchored on the immense differences between Creator and creatures, between God and human beings.³ God is transcendent while humans are finite; God is holy while humans are corrupted; and finally while God's majesty and glory are so overwhelming, humans would simply die in such presence.⁴

First, God is immortal, infinite, and eternal, but humans are mortal, finite, and transient. God transcends human beings in every respect; "Indeed his essence is incomprehensible; hence, his Divineness far escapes all human perception"⁵; "The Divine nature is infinitely

³ *Inst.* I.i.3.

⁴ *Inst.* II.xvi.3.

⁵ *Inst.* I.v.1.

exalted above the comprehension of our understanding.”⁶ Therefore, the task to comprehend God’s reality would be to “measure with the palm of our hands a hundred thousand heavens and earth and world. For God is infinite; and when the heaven of heavens cannot contain Him, how can our minds comprehend Him?”⁷ Therefore, Calvin exclaims, “How foolish it is to wish to measure God’s immensity by our measure.”⁸

Second, there is another gulf created by the impassable ravine between God’s holiness and our sinful and feeble nature. God is so holy that sinful and feeble humanity cannot stand his holy presence. Sin forms a cloud of unknowing that shuts off any reliable, self-generated vision of God.⁹ Though human sinful nature is due to human corruption, Calvin focusses on the lowly human condition given from creation: “Even if man had remained free from all stain, his condition would have been too lowly for him to reach God without a mediator.”¹⁰ Moreover, the holiness of God destroys all evils so that sinners in direct contact with Him would be “brought to nothing by the incomprehensible brightness.”¹¹

Third, God’s majesty and glory are so overwhelming that everybody who is before God’s majesty and glory will be stricken and overcome and cannot live. Calvin states that people “who, when he manifests his glory, are so shaken and struck dumb as to be laid low by the dread of death—are in fact overwhelmed by it and almost annihilated.”¹² The splendor of Divine glory is so great that even the angels are restrained from gazing at it directly.¹³ They “see God’s face in a more excellent manner than men, still they do not apprehend the immense perfection of His glory, whereby they would be absorbed.”¹⁴ The

⁶ *Comm. on Ps.* 86:8. Besides, in *Comm. on Rom.* 1:19, Calvin says, “God in his greatness can by no means be fully comprehended by our minds...”

⁷ *Comm. on Ezek.* 1:28.

⁸ *Inst.* IV.xvii.10.

⁹ *Inst.* II.xii.1; II.ii.13.

¹⁰ *Inst.* II.xii.1.

¹¹ *Comm. on Exod.* 33:20.

¹² *Inst.* I.i.3.

¹³ *Inst.* I.xi.3.

¹⁴ *Comm. on Exod.* 33:20.

glory of God, contemplated alone by man, could only fill the beholder with despair. Therefore, it is unimaginable to think of “direct communication” between God and man.

Nevertheless, in Calvin’s view, God wants to come to us and accommodate himself to us. As for the Divine driving force for his accommodation—the purpose or motive for which God accommodates himself to us—we can think of five purposes.

First of all, God accommodates himself to us for the purpose of *his love for human beings*. Calvin defines it as “a marvelous act of loving kindness” for God to present himself familiarly before their eyes, accommodating himself to their ignorance.¹⁵ God, moved by paternal love, condescends to embrace them in his care.¹⁶ Calvin asks in his *Commentary on Deuteronomy*, “Does not God accommodate himself to us for the purpose of winning us, and to the end that we should have his love imprinted on our hearts?”¹⁷ When God is described as “a husband who burns with love for his wife”, Calvin comments that though it is at odds with his glory, it is necessary “to convince us of God’s ineffable love for us”.¹⁸

Second, God wants to *lift us up to heaven*. Calvin argues that the situation would surely have been hopeless if the very majesty of God had not descended to us.¹⁹ The huge gap between God and human beings cannot be bridged by the finite and frail human effort.²⁰ God graciously descends among the Israelites to “intend to *draw* the minds of his people *upwards* to himself, and thereby to prevent them forming carnal and earthly concepts of character...”²¹ Ultimately, Jesus Christ can bridge this gulf as our eternal Mediator.²² Christ as Mediator is “the only door whereby we enter into salvation”.²³ God

¹⁵ *Comm. on Exod.* 13:21.

¹⁶ *Comm. on Psalm.* 113:5.

¹⁷ *Serm. on Deut.* 6:15-9.

¹⁸ *Comm. on Zeph.* 3:17a.

¹⁹ *Inst.* II.xii.1.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Comm. on Psalm.* 20:6.

²² *Inst.* II.xv.5.

²³ *Inst.* II.vi.1.

accommodates himself to the mean and abject human condition “that we might have easy access to Him.”²⁴ In accommodation to humankind who cannot reach to the height of God, God descends to them that “he might raise us up to it.”²⁵

Today, when the knowledge of God shines clearer, and when God in the gospel has undertaken the role of nurse, let us learn to yield our minds to him. Let us remember that he came from to us to raise us up to him. He does not speak to us in this earthly manner, to keep us at a distance from heaven, but rather as *a means of raising us up to heaven*.²⁶

The third purpose of God’s accommodation is to *reveal himself*. Dowey’s definition of accommodation highlights this point: “the process by which God reduces or adjusts to human capacities what he wills to *reveal*...”²⁷ Here the word, “*reveal*” is described as God’s ultimate intention to show why God wants the way of “accommodation”. “Christ descended to earth in order to reveal the Father’s will to men [Cf. John 1:18].” He has “in a manner opened heaven to us so that we might have a near view of those spiritual riches which before were under types exhibited at a distance.”²⁸ Christ descended to the earth to reveal the grace of God as present.²⁹ In Christ and by Christ, the will of God was revealed. The will, according to the perception of the flesh, had formerly been hidden above the clouds.³⁰

Fourth, *God wants to be familiar to us*. In Calvin, *familiariter* is his favorite word, which is usually translated into “familiarly” or “intimately”. However, as David Wright indicates, it preserves “the note of confidence of access alongside closeness of personal

²⁴ *Serm. on Luke 2:1-14.*

²⁵ *Comm. on John 14:28.*

²⁶ *Comm. on Gen. 35:7, 13.*

²⁷ Dowey, *The Knowledge of God in Calvin’s Theology*, 3.

²⁸ *Comm. on 1 Peter 1:12.*

²⁹ *Comm. on Matt. 9:6.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*

relationship”.³¹ God wants to enjoy fellowship with his people. God’s familiar relation with his people is God’s ultimate pursuit through his providence. Calvin understands that Scripture entails God’s special intention to be familiar with his people. Calvin regards “the light of his Word by which to become unto salvation” as the “privilege” allowed to “those whom he pleased to gather more closely and intimately to himself”.³² Especially, Christ, Divine manifestation in human form, shows God’s intention to be familiar. God becomes visible to humans only in Christ. Calvin indicates that, in Christ, God expects that “we may come to God in intimate confidence (*familiariter*).”³³ “He made himself familiarly and completely visible when he came down from heaven.”³⁴ Besides, Calvin finds God’s intention “to make himself more familiarly known to them” in God’s deigning to descend among the Israelites by the Ark of the Covenant.³⁵

Fifth, accommodation has *a pedagogical purpose*. Through accommodation, God wants to bring his people to the maturity he wills for them, and to educate and persuade them to that end.³⁶ Calvin relates accommodation to God’s pedagogical motif for all the ages:

God ought not to be considered changeable merely because he accommodates diverse forms to different ages...if a householder instructs, rules, and guides his children one way in infancy, another way in youth, and still another in young manhood, we shall not on this account call him fickle and say that he abandons his purpose.³⁷

³¹ David. F. Wright, “Calvin’s Accommodating God”, in *Calvinus Sincerioris Religionis Vindex*, Vol XXXVI, (Sixteenth Century Essays & Studies, 1997): 3-19, at 18.

³² *Inst.* I.vi.1.

³³ *Comm. on Pet.* 1:20.

³⁴ *Comm. on John* 8:56.

³⁵ *Comm. on Ps* 20:6.

³⁶ Calvin finds some pedagogical purpose in the signs God used for accommodation. See *Inst.* I.xi.3; II.xi.5; IV.i.24.

³⁷ *Inst.* II.xi.13.



2. What is the Human *Captus* Considered in Accommodation?

Another issue debated among scholars regarding accommodation is the matter of human *captus*. What human condition or capability does Calvin's God consider in his accommodation? Scholars have put forward diverse opinions about what human conditions or capability God considers to accommodate himself to us.

Edward Dowey speaks of two main conditions: finite comprehension and human sinfulness.

Calvin always recognizes that man was at creation and essentially remains a finite creature and that in addition he is accidentally a sinful creature. Thus, accommodation is of two varieties: (a) the universal and necessary accommodation of the infinite mysteries of God to finite comprehension, which embraces all revelation, and (b) the special, gracious accommodation to human sinfulness which is connected with the work of redemption.³⁸

David Wright adds one more here—the serious aspect of human barbarity.³⁹

It is my submission that if we may differentiate between forms between forms of God's self-accommodation according to its recipients, then in Calvin it addresses first human beings *qua* finite creatures, secondly human beings *qua* sinners, and thirdly Israel as a primitive ethos.⁴⁰

This is accommodation not merely to human *qua* humanity, or to sinful humanity, but to barbarity, the crudity and cruelty of primitive stage of human history.⁴¹

³⁸ Dowey, *The Knowledge of God in Calvin's Theology*, 4.

³⁹ Cf. David F. Wright, "Calvin's Pentateuchal Criticism: Equity, Hardness of Heart, and Divine Accommodation in the Mosaic Harmony Commentary" and "Accommodation and Barbarity in John Calvin's Old Testament Commentaries", in Graeme Auld, ed. *Understanding Poets and Prophets*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series, 152 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 413-427.

⁴⁰ Wright, "Calvin's 'Accommodation' Revisited", in *Calvin as Exegete: Papers and Response presented at the Ninth Colloquium on Calvin and Calvin Studies*, ed. Peter De Klerk (Grand Rapids: Calvin Studies Society, 1995): 171-90, at 178.

⁴¹ Wright, "Calvin's Accommodating God", 10.

Recently, Jon Balserak, in his thesis "*Deus humanitus saepe cum suis agere solet*": *An Analysis of Divine Accommodation in the Thought of John Calvin* (2002), attempted minute divisions of human *captus* considered in accommodation: mental weakness, fear, grief and doubt, unrestraint, inappropriate desires, defectiveness, sluggishness, willfulness, and hypocrisy, etc.⁴²

As the proper classification of human *captus*, instead of Balserak's too minute division in detail, I wish to add another two significant elements upon human conditions suggested by Dowey and Wright—human infirmity and culture. These have been neglected in the list of human *captus* suggested by scholars. However, human infirmity is often mentioned in Calvin's idea of accommodation. In the case of culture, it is not easy to find the exact term referring to it, but in Calvin's idea of accommodation, if we consider the broad meaning of culture including customs, laws, tradition, life style, and the spirit of the times, we can put culture among *human captus* considered in accommodation. Thus, we differentiate God's consideration for human condition in five ways: the limits of human understanding, human infirmity, human sinfulness, human barbarity, and human culture.

First, Calvin's God considers the limits of *human understanding*. In accommodation, the Divine consideration for human understanding is continuously highlighted by Calvin and his scholars. God accommodates himself to our intellectual weakness, which requires those things palpable. "For since he is in himself incomprehensible, he assumes, when he wishes to manifest himself to men, those marks by which he may be known."⁴³ Calvin is conscious of the miserable human capacity to understand. In the *Institutes*, Calvin says, "We are creatures who always creep on the ground, cleave to the flesh, and do not think about or even conceive of anything spiritual."⁴⁴ Human understanding cannot comprehend

⁴² Jon Balserak, "*Deus humanitus saepe cum suis agere solet*": *An Analysis of Divine Accommodation in the Thought of John Calvin*", (Ph.D. diss., University of Edinburgh, 2002), 65-90.

⁴³ *Comm. on Gen.* 3:8.

⁴⁴ *Inst.* IV.xiv.3.

the incomprehensible God in his majesty and glory. “Certainly the knowledge of God is a wisdom that is too high for our attaining it by our own acuteness, and our weakness shows itself in daily instances in our own experience, when God withdraws his hand for a little while.”⁴⁵ Therefore, we cannot comprehend God except insofar as he accommodates himself to the meager measure of our understanding.⁴⁶ Christ can be interpreted as God’s effort to accommodate himself to our understanding: “through Christ, God in a manner makes himself little in order to accommodate himself to our comprehension.”⁴⁷ In his comment on the burning bush, Calvin remarks that God “descended in some way from his majesty”, assuming visible forms so “that he might reveal himself as far as was useful and as far as their comprehension would admit.”⁴⁸ The most well known example of God’s accommodation to our poor human understanding is Calvin’s metaphor of God as a nurse:

For who, even of slight intelligence does not understand that, as nurses commonly do with infants, God is wont in a measure to “lisp” (*balbutire*) in speaking to us? Thus such forms of speaking (that God has mouth, ears, hands and feet) do not so much express clearly what God is like as accommodate (*accommodant*) the knowledge of him to our slight capacity. To do this he must descend (*descendere necesse est*) far beneath his loftiness.⁴⁹

Like nurses, God “lisps”. Here the term “lisp” well represents Divine consideration of “our slight capacity”, because just as a baby cannot understand adults’ words, God’s self revelation at his own level is completely beyond us.⁵⁰

Second, Calvin understands that God considers *human infirmity*. When Scripture says that the Word was made *flesh*, Calvin interprets that “the son of God stooped so low as to

⁴⁵ *Comm. on Phil.* 1:29.

⁴⁶ *Comm. on Ezek.* 9:3-4.

⁴⁷ *Comm. on 1 Pet.* 1:20.

⁴⁸ *Comm. on Exod.* 3:2.

⁴⁹ *Inst.* I.xiii.1.

⁵⁰ Cf. *Comm. on Gen.* 3:8; *1 Cor.* 2:7. “God accommodates himself to our understanding in revelation because of his incomprehensibility.”

take upon Himself that flesh subject to so many miseries. The word *flesh* in this context does not refer to our corrupt nature, but our mortality and its disdainfully frail and perishing nature.⁵¹ In his *Commentary on Isaiah* 57:16, Calvin refers to God's consideration of human infirmity, "for my part, I think the prophet rises higher; for he shows that the Lord deals so gently and kindly with us, because he perceives how *weak and feeble* we are."⁵² The most impressive image of God caring for infirmity is that of a shepherd tending the weak sheep:

These words describe God's wonderful condescension, for not only, is he led by a general feeling of love for his whole flock, but, in proportion to the weakness of any one sheep, he shows his carefulness in watching, his gentleness in handling, and his patience in leading it.... In a word, God will be mild, kind, gentle, and compassionate, so that he will not drive the weak harder than they are able to bear.⁵³

Calvin believes that both Scriptures and Sacraments are "the means and instruments of his secret grace, adapted to our weakness", given by "God as the only author of our salvation".⁵⁴ Battles interprets that, in Calvin's *Institutes*, "Book IV in its totality describes God's accommodation to the weakness of his people."⁵⁵ Battles defines human ministry as God's agent to preach and care: "The very choice of a human ministry to proclaim the saving message and to nurture us in spiritual growth is in itself an act of accommodation by God to our capacity."⁵⁶

Third, Calvin's God accommodates to *human sinfulness*. Human sinfulness includes spiritual and moral death such as "blindness, insensibility, sluggish unresponsiveness, and

⁵¹ *Comm. on John* 1:14.

⁵² *Comm. on Isa.* 57:16.

⁵³ *Comm. on Isa.* 40:11.

⁵⁴ "And Geneva as to The Sacraments", in *Tracts and Treatises*, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1958). vol. II, 227.

⁵⁵ F. Battles, "God was Accommodating Himself to Human Capacity, " *Interpreting John Calvin* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Bakerbooks, 1996), 132.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

torpidity”.⁵⁷ Moses’ law demands that a woman having given birth should bring a sacrifice for a sin offering on behalf of herself and her child.⁵⁸ Calvin argues that the very reason for God to require redundant devices beside circumcision which would be enough to cleanse the stain of human corruption is that God was not content with one symbol for the expurgation of sin, but “added another subsidiary sign, and did this especially because he knew *the profundity and depth of human sinfulness*.”⁵⁹ When the Psalmist depicts God as a drunkard, Calvin comments that “the analogy of a drunk man, although very harsh, is used deliberately, because it is accommodated to people’s insensibility...It was the drunkenness of the people, that is their unresponsiveness, which drove him to compare himself to a drunk, and to their great shame.”⁶⁰

Fourth, Calvin’s God accommodates to *human barbarity*.⁶¹ The law given to the Jews was not the ideal law God wished to give to humanity, but rather an accommodation to a rude and uneducated people who would not have understood or benefited from a more sublime revelation: for instance, Mosaic permission of divorce cannot be in accordance with God’s absolute righteousness when we consider Matthew 19:18: “Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning.” Jesus’ words reflect the discrepancy between God’s perfect principle and God’s law in the Pentateuch: “God has relaxed the rigor of his justice in consideration of

⁵⁷ Wright, “Calvin’s Accommodating God”, 8.

⁵⁸ *Comm. on Lev. 12:1-8; Luke 2:23.*

⁵⁹ *Comm. on Lev. 12:2.*

⁶⁰ *Comm. on Ps. 78:65.*

⁶¹ I owe these points to David Wright’s various articles: “Calvin’s Pentateuchal Criticism: Equity, Hardness of Heart, and Divine Accommodation in the Mosaic Harmony Commentary”, in Calvin’s *Theological Journal* 21 (1986): 33-55; “Calvin’s accommodating God”, in Wilhelm Neuser & Brian G. Armstrong, eds., *Calvinus Sincerioris Religionis Vindex: Papers Presented at Sixth International Congress on Calvin Research* (September, 1997): 3-19; “Accommodation and Barbarity in John Calvin’s Old Testament Commentaries” in *Understanding Poets and Prophets*, ed. Graeme Auld (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 413-427.

the people's hardness of heart."⁶² Another example is God's authorization of the inquiry of Urim and Thummin can be understood as God's condescension to the rudeness of his ancient people.⁶³ God's law that the drinking of the blood of a brute beast should be expiated by the death of a human being (Lev. 17:13-4) reflects God's intention to "keep rude people from their speedily lapsing into barbarism".⁶⁴ The most serious example is the slavery system where the discrepancy between God's perfect law and his adjusted law to humanity become clear. Calvin focusses on God's proclamation in Exod. 21:1-6 that a slave who had married a fellow slave and had children could be released on a sabbatical year provided that he left his wife and children behind. David Wright emphasises that Calvin called this forced separation "gross barbarity" for "nothing could be more contrary to nature than a husband to forsake his wife and abandon his children and move elsewhere."⁶⁵ However, Calvin praises God's tolerance in this outward absurdity in terms of accommodation, saying that God tolerated another defect because of people's irremediable hardness of heart.⁶⁶ Calvin finds God's benevolent intention hidden here. "The fact that God did not carry out the political law to their perfection shows that by this leniency he wished to reprove the people's perverseness, which could not even bear to obey so mild a law."⁶⁷ God who understands too well how vulnerable and recalcitrant they were, liked to rule Israel generously displaying fatherly love rather than despotic sternness.⁶⁸

Finally, Calvin's God accommodates to *human culture*. As we see in the case of God's allowance of slavery or divorce, we understand that God considers human culture. David Wright briefly mentions: "All God's self revelation is attempered to human, and even

⁶² *Comm. on Exod.* 20:1-4. cf. Wright, "Calvin's Pentateuchal Criticism", 38-9.

⁶³ *Comm. on Exod.* 28:4; Cf. *Comm. on Exod.* 25:8ff.

⁶⁴ *Comm. on Lev.* 17:10.

⁶⁵ *Comm. on Exod.* 21:1-6. Wright, "Calvin's Pentateuchal Criticism", 40-41.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Comm. on Exod.* 21:18.

⁶⁸ *Comm. on Num.* 22:22.

sinful human capacities, using human languages, expressed in the forms and patterns of human life and society, and so on.”⁶⁹ Here David Wright mentions one significant phrase, “the forms and patterns of human life and society”, in one word: culture. As Selinger indicates, Calvin, in his *Commentary on Psalms*, repeatedly notes that David adapted himself to his people’s need for those things concrete and palpable. In particular, the law and ceremonies as essential elements of culture are none other than the language they could understand and the necessary dispensation before the new covenant.⁷⁰

3. Calvin’s Theological Employment of Accommodation

In recent decades, scholars have shown growing interest in the significance of accommodation in Calvin’s theology. Edward Dowey says that accommodation had been “largely unnoticed by students of Calvin until the middle of this century.”⁷¹ In 1950, Wendel provided a concise introduction to the theme.⁷² In 1952, Edward Dowey engaged in exploring many significant aspects of accommodation in a more systematic and extended discussion in his book, *The Knowledge of God in Calvin’s Theology*. In 1962, H. Jackson Forstman, in his book, *Word and Spirit*, explains accommodation, focussing on the infinite distance between the majesty of God and human meanness: “What knowledge of the infinite God is communicated to men will of necessity be tempered to human capacity.”⁷³ In 1974, E. David Willis wrote the article of “Rhetoric and responsibility in Calvin’s Theology”.⁷⁴ In 1977, F. L. Battles wrote a memorable article on accommodation,

⁶⁹ David Wright, “Calvin’s Accommodating God”, 17.

⁷⁰ Suzanne Selinger, *Calvin against Himself* (Hamden: Archon Books, 1984), 67.

⁷¹ Dowey, *The Knowledge of God in Calvin’s Theology*, 249.

⁷² F. Wendel *Calvin: The Origins and Development of His Religious Thought* (London: Collins, 1963), 229-30. Its French version was issued in 1950.

⁷³ H. Jackson Forstman, *Word and Spirit* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1962), 13.

⁷⁴ E. David Willis, “Rhetoric and Responsibility in Calvin’s Theology”, in *Articles on Calvin and Calvinism*, vol. 4, *Influences upon Calvin and Discussion of the 1559 Institutes*, edit. Richard C. Gamble (New York & London: Garland Publishing, Inc, 1992): 83-103.

“God was Accommodating Himself to Human Capacity,”⁷⁵ which attracted scholars’ interest. He competes with Dowey for the reputation as the pioneer of the topic, though Dowey claims, “The first extended treatment [of accommodation] was my own.”⁷⁶ Since 1986, David Wright has written a series of articles in a Biblical and historical approach.⁷⁷ He evaluates accommodation as what “takes us to the heart of Calvin theology.”⁷⁸ Recently, in 2002, Jon Balserak analyzed Calvin’s Divine accommodation focussing on human *captus* and God’s response to that in his dissertation under the supervision of David Wright.⁷⁹

Accommodation is not Calvin’s invention or his original idea. In the 16th century, Calvin had a great opportunity to access the concept of “accommodation”, because in those days, the concept of “accommodation” had already been a popular one which “began its lengthy, distinguished, and checkered career in the theological arena, appearing prolifically in both Christian and Jewish religious traditions.”⁸⁰ Furthermore, the popularity of accommodation was not restricted to those traditions, but permeated society in general. Stephen D. Benin points out in the introduction of *The Footprints of God* that Divine accommodation / condescension, “permeates Christian and Jewish thought, finds expression in exegetical, legal, homiletic, and philosophical sources from the first through the sixteenth centuries, and conceivably enters the mainstream of post-Enlightenment thought as a possibly undetected element in the rise of historicism.”⁸¹

⁷⁵ Battles, “God was Accommodating Himself to Human Capacity”, 117-137.

⁷⁶ Dowey, *The Knowledge of God in Calvin’s Theology*, 249, n.18, n.19.

⁷⁷ Wright, “Calvin’s Pentateuchal Criticism: Equity, Hardness of Heart, and Divine Accommodation in the Mosaic Harmony Commentary (1986)”; “Accommodation and Barbarity in John Calvin’s Old Testament Commentaries (1993)”; “Calvin’s Accommodating God (1994)”.

⁷⁸ Wright, “Calvin’s Accommodating God”, 18.

⁷⁹ Balserak, “‘*Deus humanitus saepe cum suis agere solet*’: An Analysis of Divine Accommodation in the Thought of John Calvin”, (Ph.D. diss., University of Edinburgh, 2002).

⁸⁰ Stephen D. Benin, *The Footprints of God* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1993), p. xv.

⁸¹ Benin, *Footprints*, xiii.

I understand that Calvin was influenced by two particular traditions: humanistic rhetoric and the writings of the Church Fathers, especially Chrysostom, who had great rhetorical skills.

First, as for the relation between human rhetoric and accommodation, there is a general consensus among scholars that Calvin was a humanist with a great rhetorical talent. F. Wendel supports this idea by comparing the method he used in his *Commentary on the 'De Clementia' by Seneca* and that used in the *Paraphrases* of Erasmus and especially in the *Annotations* of Guillaume Budé on the Pandects.

Like Budé, Calvin begins with a rather long philological explanation, he appeals to grammar and logic, he points out the figures of rhetoric, draws upon his knowledge of antiquity to collect parallel quotations from other ancient writers and from Seneca himself.⁸²

Calvin does not value humanistic authors more than Scripture. As Wendel indicates, after his conversion, Calvin “lowered the ancient authors in the hierarchy of values he admired, to the advantage of Scripture.”⁸³ This point is clearly represented in the *Institutes* of 1539.

When we read Demosthenes or Cicero, Plato or Aristotle or some others of their kind, I confess indeed that they wonderfully attract, delight and move us, even ravish our minds. But if from them we turn to the reading of the Holy Scriptures, whether we will or no they so pierce us to the heart and fix themselves within us that all the power of the rhetoricians and philosophers, compared with them, seems no more than smoke.⁸⁴

However, for Calvin, humanistic rhetoric is not a rival of Scripture, but, rather, provides a good and useful tool in conveying his theology based on Scripture. Calvin makes use of his rhetorical skills which he learned and mastered during his humanist education and applies

⁸² Wendel, *Calvin: The Origin and Development of His Religious Thought* 31.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 34.

⁸⁴ *Inst.* I.viii.1. (1539)

them to the theological tasks *in a creative way*. Wendel comments that Calvin used this method to interpret Scripture: “It was Calvin who first made it in the very basis of his exegesis and in doing so founded the modern science of exegetics.”⁸⁵ There is a harmony between his humanistic mind and his theology. Seeberg succinctly emphasises this point.

Humanist culture was not only, in Calvin's eyes, a torch bearing the light of the Gospel, but in spite of his strict Biblicism, his humanist mind was in some degree *harmonized* with the Gospel. The mental formation and the religion, the culture and the morality, went hand in hand. Calvin really arrived at that *union* to which Melanchthon aspired but never attained except in a rather external manner.⁸⁶

Let's narrow the focus of our inquiry to the relation of humanistic rhetoric to accommodation. Above all, we find several definitions of accommodation in relation to classical rhetoric. In its definition, *Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms* states that theologians trained in classical rhetoric (Origen, Chrysostom, Augustine, and Calvin) used the idea of accommodation to indicate God's condescension in revelation.⁸⁷ In his glossary of theological terms, Timothy George defines accommodation as a “rhetorical metaphor frequently used by Calvin to refer to God's condescension to the limits and needs of the human condition”.⁸⁸ J.B. Rogers and Donald K. McKim insist that Calvin learned the concept of accommodation from the Latin rhetoricians and jurists.⁸⁹ The Latin rhetoricians and jurists used the term “accommodation” to mean “the process of fitting, adapting, and adjusting language to the capacity of the hearers”.⁹⁰ For them, “accommodation” just signified “a matter of building a language between the content of the presentation and

⁸⁵ Wendel, *Calvin: The Origin and Development of His Religious Thought*, 31.

⁸⁶ Reinhold Seeberg, *Lehrbuch des Dogmengeschichte*, 2nd edition, 4 vols. (Leipzig: A. Deichert, 1920), vol. IV, pt. 2, quoted in Wendel, *Calvin: The Origin and Development of His Religious Thought*, 33.

⁸⁷ *Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms*, 1996 ed., s.v. “Accommodation”.

⁸⁸ Timothy George, *Theology of the Reformers* (Nashville, Tn: Broadman Press, 1988), 324.

⁸⁹ J.B. Rogers and Donald K. McKim, *The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1979), 98.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

capacity of the audience”.

However, David Wright shows some dissension to the idea: “I remain less than convinced that accommodation in Calvin is a rhetorical borrowing.”⁹¹ For the basis of this opinion, he indicates that we cannot find any close equivalent in Roman rhetorical theory that matches Calvin’s use of accommodation.

The rhetoricians certainly worked with criteria of aptness (*aptum*) and propriety (*decorum*), whereby an orator adjusted what he said and how he said it to his audience, the occasion, his subject matter and intention, and so on. Quite apart from the absence of distinctive terminology, this is light years away from the range and depth of Calvin’s applications of accommodation.⁹²

We can agree with David Wright, in that for Calvin, accommodation does not follow decorum to the letter as the overarching principle of the Roman rhetoric. However, at the same time, it should be emphasised that Calvin’s accommodation pursues another level of decorum: *God’s decorum to human understanding*. As William Bouwsma indicates, Calvin has the view that Scripture is “everywhere accommodated by God’s decorum to human understanding.”⁹³ More concretely, we can understand this point from the angle of *Calvin’s creative transformation of human rhetoric into Divine rhetoric*. In this vein, Battles understands that “Calvin exchanged for human rhetoric a Divine rhetoric.”⁹⁴ Jack

⁹¹ Wright, “Was John Calvin a ‘Rhetorical Theologian’?” 62.

⁹² Wright, “Calvin’s Accommodating God”, 16. According to Dr. Gideon Burton, decorum in the virtue of style of rhetoric refers to “the rhetorical principle requiring that one’s words and subject matter should be aptly fit to each other, to the circumstances and occasion, the audience, and the speaker.” He regards it as not only an overarching principle of moderation and aptness, but also a controlling principle in correlating certain rhetorical genres or strategies to certain circumstances. In particular, Burton notices that decorum “invokes a range of social, linguistic, aesthetic, and ethical proprieties for both the creators and critics of speech or writing.” What is significant here is that each of these must be balanced against each other strategically in order to be successful in understanding or creating discourse. Burton regards Cicero as the one who “followed the principle of decorum in assigning an appropriate level of style to distinct rhetorical purposes.” (Aristotle, *Rhet.* 3; Cic. *De Or.* 3.208). Burton, Gideon, *Silva Rhetoricae: The Forest of Rhetoric*. Brigham Young University. <http://humanities.byu.edu/rhetoric/silva.htm>.

⁹³ Bouwsma, *John Calvin: A Sixteenth-Century Portrait*, 124.

⁹⁴ Battles, “God was accommodating to Human Capacity”, 117. Cf. *Inst.*, I.viii.1f.

Rogers and Donald McKim, too, are in the same line, indicating that Calvin's conversion to the evangelical faith is not a repudiation of classical learning, but a *transformation* of it, under the guidance of God's Word.⁹⁵

We find both aspects of continuity and discontinuity between Divine rhetoric and human rhetoric. As for the discontinuity, we can indicate a fundamental difference in the gulf between human rhetoric and Divine rhetoric. There is a great gulf between the relation between God and humanity and the relation between the rhetoricians and the audience. In human rhetoric, humans speak to humans (finite being to finite being), but in Divine rhetoric God speaks to humans (infinite being to finite being). The difference between these two relations is the difference of quality, or, to borrow Barth's term, "an irrevocable otherness" between 'finite' and 'infinite'.⁹⁶ The knowledge of God is too high and ethereal, while our human state is too low, gross, and crude.

Another difference is found in their style. As David Wright argues well in his article, "Was John Calvin a 'Rhetoric Theologian?'",⁹⁷ we notice a great difference between the styles of Divine rhetoric and human rhetoric. Wright makes the point loom large by focussing on Divine rhetoric's rejection of one of the virtues of rhetoric: *ornateness*, which refers to "the various aesthetic qualities of language so fully illustrated among the various figures of speech" or "the sound and rhythms of words in their oral and aural dimensions."⁹⁸

As Wright argues, this point is well suggested in Calvin's comments on the Corinthian believers. "The ears of the Corinthians were tickled with a silly fondness for high sounding style. Hence they needed more than others to be brought back to the abasement of the

⁹⁵ Jack B. Rogers & Donald K. McKim, *The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible*, 89.

⁹⁶ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, II/2 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1957), 189. Hereafter abbreviated into *CD*. To look for this concept in Calvin, see the above Chapter II.1. "Why does God Accommodate Himself?"

⁹⁷ David Wright, "Was John Calvin a 'Rhetoric Theologian?'", *Calvin Studies* IX (1998): 46-69.

⁹⁸ Cf. Gideon, *Silva Rhetoricae: The Forest of Rhetoric*. <http://human-ities.byu.edu/rhetoric/silva.htm>. s.v.

Cross, that they might learn to embrace Christ as he is, unadorned, and the gospel in its simplicity, without any false ornament.”⁹⁹ The prime characteristic of Calvin’s Divine rhetoric is the rejection of the simple verbal embellishment of human rhetoric and its emphasis on “grandeur of subjects” than “grace of language”.¹⁰⁰ According to Calvin, the embellishment with all the colorfulness of human rhetoric of a Demosthenes or a Cicero may have “the attractiveness for enticing readers”, but that “of its power for moving consciences and its value for gaining authority for itself not even one percent would be left.”¹⁰¹ This negative aspect of human rhetoric is characterized by that eloquence “to lead Christians to be taken up with an outward glitter of words, or intoxicate them with empty delight, or tickle their ears with its tinkling sound, or cover over the Cross of Christ with its empty show as with a veil.”¹⁰² Calvin regards it as the representation of “the arrogant wisdom of the flesh” full of all pride and loftiness. Calvin criticizes false ornaments of speech which ‘obscure’ the simple and unadorned preaching of Christ crucified. These disfigure the simplicity of gospel. Besides, the efficacy of the Spirit vanishes because “our minds were turned aside to neatness and elegance of expression, to ingenious speculations, and to an empty show of superior sublimity of doctrine.”¹⁰³ Therefore, God’s Divine rhetoric prefers to hold the gospel “in simplicity, without any aid from eloquence”. Divine rhetoric seeks a “simple and clear style without attractive flourish and ornament,” as Higman revealed in his analysis of *The Style of John Calvin in His French Polemical Treatise*,¹⁰⁴ far from the technical language of brilliant oratory: “Where there is no brilliant oratory to blind people the heavenly wisdom blazes forth all the more powerfully.”¹⁰⁵

“Virtues of Style” 5. “Ornateness.”

⁹⁹ *Comm. on I Cor.* 1:17.

¹⁰⁰ *Inst.* I.viii.1.

¹⁰¹ *OS* II:170-71= John W. Fraser, trans. *Concerning Scandals* (Grand Rapids, MI, 1978), 16.

¹⁰² *Comm. on I Cor.* 1:17.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ France M. Higman, *The Style of John Calvin in His French Polemical Treatise* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), 121, 154, 157.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

However, at the same time, for our balanced view, we should notice that, in spite of these differences, there is some continuity between Divine rhetoric and human rhetoric. First of all, they have common aims. Just as classical rhetoric aims to inform, delight, and move the audience, Divine rhetoric has the common purposes—inform, delight, and move: “God is one who accommodates himself to human weakness to restore men to their freedom, to persuade them of their vindication in Christ, and to *inform, delight, and move* them to live out their adoption as free sons.”¹⁰⁶ In particular, among these, two aims in Divine rhetoric are outstanding: *docere* (inform or teach) / *movere* (move or persuade). As David Willis puts it, “God’s purpose through his dealing with men is to bring them to the maturity he wills for them, and he *educates and persuades* them to that end.”¹⁰⁷

Above all, as for *docere*, Calvin directly relates God’s teaching intention to God’s “stooping down” for accommodation: “Is it not a great stooping down from his highness? But seeing that God does so lessen himself as to our rudeness to *teach* us, should we let his Word fall to the ground and despise it?”¹⁰⁸ In the *Institutes*, Calvin clearly says, “all the signs that he (God) ever gave forth aptly *conformed to his plan of teaching* and at the same time clearly told men of his incomprehensible essence.”¹⁰⁹ In the Old Testament, God used the law to teach his people: “the Jews were led to Christ by the tutelage of the law before he appeared in the flesh [Gal 3:24].”¹¹⁰ Calvin assumes that God might “more effectually try our obedience and docility, and train us to true humility.”¹¹¹ Calvin asserts that the simple style has the effect that “believers should be drawn off from all pride and haughtiness.”¹¹² As Quirinus Breen states, the simple style of “brevity” and “clarity” is the

¹⁰⁶ E. David Willis, “Rhetoric and Responsibility in Calvin’s Theology”, 88.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 93.

¹⁰⁸ *Sermons on Deut.* 119b. (Deut 4:3-6)

¹⁰⁹ *Inst.* I.xi.3.

¹¹⁰ *Inst.* II.xi.5.

¹¹¹ *Comm. on I Cor.* 1:17.

¹¹² *Comm. on I Cor.* 1:17.

proper style for teaching.¹¹³ In her book, *Calvin and Rhetoric*,¹¹⁴ Serene Jones who described Calvin's God as "Grand Rhetorician", talks about the role of *docere* that our knowledge of God should play, focussing on the *Institutes* I.ii.2,

Our knowledge should serve first to *teach* us fear and reverence; secondly, with it as our guide as teacher, we should learn to seek every good from him, and having received it, to credit it to his account.¹¹⁵

Wright shows no dissension as to the motive of *docere* inherent in accommodation as Divine rhetoric. Wright recognizes the pedagogical purpose of accommodation to "serve our good and amend this evil" in Calvin's commentary on Zephaniah 3:17 where God lowers himself as a husband loving his wife: "Here accommodation indeed begins in apologetic and ends in pedagogy."¹¹⁶ This speaks for God's pedagogical intention in accommodation.

Next, as for *movere* (*persuade*) quality of Divine rhetoric, Willis, Battles, and Wright all agree that the purpose of God's accommodation is to persuade us.¹¹⁷ Calvin states in his *Institutes* I.ii.1: "we need to be '*persuaded* that [God] is the fountain of every good.'" Calvin's conviction is that the powerful persuasion of the Divine Word lies in the absence of rhetorical gloss: "in a plain and unpolished manner of address, the majesty of the truth might shine forth more conspicuously, and the simple efficacy of his Spirit, without

¹¹³ Quirinus Breen, "John Calvin and Rhetorical Tradition", *Church History*, vol xxvi (1957): 3-21 at 16.

¹¹⁴ Serene Jones, *Calvin and the Rhetoric of Piety* (Columbia Series in Reformed Theology; Louisville, KY, 1995)

¹¹⁵ Jones, *Calvin and the Rhetoric*, 138.

¹¹⁶ Wright, "Calvin's Accommodating God", 9.

¹¹⁷ Willis states that "God persuasively accommodates his purpose to man's persuadability" (Willis, "Rhetoric and Responsibility in Calvin's Theology", 93-97.) "Revelation (is) God's persuasive accommodation...and the story of this accommodation is the history of the economy of his covenantal purpose" (Ibid., 93). Battles insists that "accommodation begins as an apologetic tool against hostile critics of Scripture." (Battles, "God was Accommodation Himself to Human Capacity." 19-38, at 26). Wright, too, following Battles's opinion, approves that "beyond doubt the apologetic appeal to accommodation is prominent in Calvin." (Wright, "Calvin's Accommodating God", 7). We can be certain that here, the word, "apologetic" stands for some logical argument to persuade people into the correction of the wrong heretical ideas. This signifies that accommodation entails "the intention to persuade".

external aids, might make its way into the hearts of men.”¹¹⁸

Second, as Battles explains, Divine rhetoric and human rhetoric show some parallel structure between the speaker and the audience.

As in human rhetoric there is a gulf between the highly educated and the comparatively unlearned, between the convinced and the unconvinced, a gulf which it is the task of rhetoric to bridge so that through simple, appropriate language the depths of human thought yield up their treasure, or at least the views of the speaker are persuasively communicated—analogously in Divine rhetoric, the infinitely greater gulf between God and man, through Divine condescension, in word and deed, is bridged. ¹¹⁹

We can suggest several analogical relations of the parallel structure: (1) there are two parties¹²⁰; (2) there is a gulf between two parties; (3) the gulf needs to be bridged; (4) the great strategy to bridge the gulf is adjustment to given circumstances (decorum and accommodation). I suggest that these analogical relations are the strong foundation of the continuity between Divine rhetoric and human rhetoric. Among these analogical relations, the controlling core is the strategy to bridge of the gap. Divine rhetoric and human rhetoric share the common strategy to bridge the gulf between two parties separated by some intervening chasm in their situation, character, intelligence, etc. In case of human rhetoric, the strategy is decorum, moderation, and aptness, and in case of Divine rhetoric, the strategy is condescension or accommodation. However, these two share the same idea of “adjustment to given situation”. Just as Latin rhetoricians and jurists tried to adjust to the capacity of the audience in order to create the most effective communication, God adjusts to the capacity of his audience for the effective communication. Bouwsma points out that though Moses and David were skilled orators, they deliberately condescended to the

¹¹⁸ *Comm. on I Cor.* 1:17.

¹¹⁹ Battles, “God was Accommodating to Human Capacity”, 118.

¹²⁰ Here two parties refer to the speaker and the audience in case of human rhetoric, and God and humanity in case of Divine rhetoric.

rudeness of their people. Here, Bouwsma cites Calvin's comment that Moses "did not speak acutely or in a philosophical way, but popularly, so that even the most uncultivated, might understand" and he had "deliberately abstained from subtle disputations that might smack of the schools and deeper learning."¹²¹

Third, both pursue the effective communication between two parties and share a lot of virtues of style. Wright estimates that human rhetoric is "light years away from the range and depth of Calvin's applications of accommodation."¹²² This comment in the form of overstatement is heavily focused on one of the virtues of rhetoric style: *ornateness*. Wright argues that Divine rhetoric as accommodation, unlike human rhetoric, prefers "simple and clear style to "attractive flourish and ornament"; "its simplicity" to "any false ornament"; and "grandeur of subjects" to "grace of language". However, *ornateness* does not cover the whole virtues of human rhetoric. As Burton clearly reveals, the style of Roman rhetoric covers many other virtues of correctness, clarity, evidence, and propriety besides *ornateness*.¹²³ Among these, correctness, clarity, and evidence are those virtues to emphasise the efficient delivery of "more of substance than elegance". They are befitting to Calvin's Divine rhetoric which emphasises "grandeur of subjects" than "grace of language". For instance, clarity, among these, closely related to correctness or purity (above), refers to that quality of style by which language is intelligible. This involves using

¹²¹ William J. Bouwsma, *John Calvin: A Sixteenth-century Portrait* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 124; Cf. *Comm. on Gen.* 1:14, 2:10, 3:1, 6:14, *Ex.* 7:8.

¹²² Wright, "Calvin's Accommodating God", 16. According to Dr. Gideon Burton, decorum in the virtue of style of rhetoric refers to "the rhetorical principle requiring that one's words and subject matter should be aptly fit to each other, to the circumstances and occasion, the audience, and the speaker." He estimates it as not only an overarching principle of moderation and aptness, but also a controlling principle in correlating certain rhetorical genres or strategies to certain circumstances. In particular, Burton notices that decorum "invokes a range of social, linguistic, aesthetic, and ethical proprieties for both the creators and critics of speech or writing." What is significant here is that each of these must be balanced against each other strategically in order to be successful in understanding or creating discourse. Burton regards Cicero as the one who "followed the principle of decorum in assigning an appropriate level of style to distinct rhetorical purposes." (Aristotle, *Rhet.* 3; Cic. *De Or.* 3.208). Burton, Gideon, *Silva Rhetoricae: The Forest of Rhetoric*. Brigham Young University. <http://humanities.byu.edu/rhetoric/silva.htm>.

¹²³ Burton, Gideon, *Silva Rhetoricae: The Forest of Rhetoric*. Brigham Young University. <http://humanities.byu.edu/rhetoric/silva.htm>. s.v. "virtues of style".

the proper names and terms for things, and following a straightforward style in arranging words. When Julius Caesar said "*Veni, vidi, vici*" ("I came; I saw; I conquered"), there is no ornament or no embellishment or no empty words as we see in the style of the gospel embodying Divine rhetoric. But this simple and unadorned style can be called the most excellent Roman rhetoric. Therefore, we can say that clarity is the common virtue of Divine rhetoric and human rhetoric.¹²⁴ In addition, propriety, referring to decorum in human rhetoric, and accommodation in Divine rhetoric, is the most corresponding virtue of style. In terms of these virtues of style, we cannot find any contradiction or "light years away", which Wright indicates, between Divine rhetoric and human rhetoric.

One step further, Divine rhetoric does not exclude all area of *ornateness*. It may reject various aesthetic qualities of *ornateness* such as attractive flourish, embellishment, and colorfulness of all kinds of ornaments used in human rhetoric, because they can impede or jeopardize clarity. But we cannot deny that even Divine rhetoric makes use of various figures of speech which belong to *ornateness* of human rhetoric. Like human rhetoric, Divine rhetoric has a command of figures of speech such as symbols, allegories, or metaphors. Augustine says, "Whatever appears in the Divine Word that does not properly pertain to virtuous behavior or to the truth of faith, you must take to be figurative."¹²⁵ Roland M. Fry explores Calvin's use of figurative speech in his article, "Calvin's Theological Use of Figurative Language."¹²⁶ Wright indicates some surprising similarities between allegory and accommodation: "there may prove to be uncanny similarity between allegory in the Fathers and accommodations as Calvin applies the latter."¹²⁷ Calvin, too, regards the figurative language as a tool for Divine accommodation. For instance, Calvin remarks that when God says, "I determined to pour my burning fury..." in Ezekiel 20:8,

¹²⁴ *Inst.* I.viii.1.

¹²⁵ Robert Preus, *From Shadow to Promise: Old Testament Interpretation from Augustine to the Young Luther* (Cambridge: Belknap, 1969), 13.

¹²⁶ Roland M. Fry, "Calvin's Theological Use of Figurative Language", *Calvin Studies* IV, 73-94.

¹²⁷ Wright, "Calvin's Accommodating God", 7.

God accommodates these experiences alien to himself (such as being affected by anger) using analogy (*similitudinem*).¹²⁸ Besides, Calvin states that God's repentance and change of mind do not refer to God himself but to the accommodated God and thus it should be "taken figuratively."¹²⁹ Many puzzling Biblical texts, especially ones dealing with natural phenomena in an unscientific way, should be interpreted figuratively, taking into account the earliest stages of simple and rude human culture. David describes the sun as emerging from a tent. This is not scientific, but deliberately chosen "homely style" to "the rude and unlearned".¹³⁰ In particular, these rhetorical devices play the role of the very significant mirrors to show Divine reality in Divine accommodation, whether in human rhetoric or in Divine accommodation.¹³¹ "Under symbols which were adapted to the capacity of the flesh, He enabled them to taste in part what could not be fully apprehended."¹³² Calvin is persistent in emphasizing figurative language which employs symbols, metaphors, and signs through which we find God accommodating his reality to our limited understanding in Sacraments and Scripture and the Cross.

Divine rhetoric does not exclude or ignore human rhetoric. Rather, we find that Calvin recognizes that human rhetoric came from God:

For as Augustine says, 'He who gave Peter a fisherman, gave also Cyprian an orator.' By this he means that both are from God, notwithstanding the fact that the one, who is much the superior of the other as to dignity, is utterly devoid of gracefulness of speech; while the other, who sits at his feet, is distinguished by the fame of his eloquence.¹³³

If we broaden our perspective from gospel to the whole Bible, we notice that Divine rhetoric does not stick to only one style to everyone. In a sense, it is inclusive and flexible

¹²⁸ *Comm. on Ezek.* 20:8-9.

¹²⁹ *Inst.* I.xvii.13.

¹³⁰ *Comm. on Ps.* 19:4; Cf. *Ps.* 135:7, 114:5.

¹³¹ As for the significance of figurative expressions such as symbol, allegory, and metaphor, see below, Chapter II. 5. "The Divine Strategy for Accommodation". Cf. Roland M. Fry, "Calvin's Theological Use of Figurative Language", *Calvin Studies* IV, 73-94.

¹³² *Comm. on Matt.* 17:2.

in that it takes into account “diversity of times” and “diverse ways of learning”, and it accommodates to the men of the Old Testament, to the clergy of all ages as well as to people of all background.¹³⁴ It covers not only the eloquence of the prophets such as Isaiah, David, and Solomon, and Moses, but also more unpolished style of the writings of the Apostles. God “wants not only to instruct learned clergy and people who are very subtle and have been trained in school, but wishes to accommodate to even to roughest common people.”¹³⁵

Even though Calvin emphasises the great gap between the gospel and human rhetoric, we find the same Calvin endowing human rhetoric with some positive role to serve the gospel: “...eloquence is not in conflict with the simplicity of the gospel at all, when, free from contempt of the gospel, it not only gives it first place, and is subject to it, but also serves it *as a handmaid serves her mistress*.”¹³⁶

Therefore, I assert that, in his creative transformation, Calvin percolates dregs of negative embellishment or ornamentation and discerns the positive rhetoric of intrinsic eloquence “suited to the Spirit of God”. This Divine rhetoric “suited to the Spirit of God” can be summed up as follows: (1) intrinsic power and beauty; (2) rejection of false ornament of speech; (3) emphasis on “grandeur of subjects” than “grace of language” (4) flexibility to pursues diverse style fitting to diverse kinds of people.

...the Spirit of God, also, has an eloquence of his own, but of such a nature as to shine forth with a native luster peculiar to itself, or rather (as they say) intrinsic, more than with any adventitious ornaments. Such is the eloquence that the Prophets have, more particularly, Isaiah, David, and Solomon. Moses, too, has a sprinkling of it. Nay farther, even in the writings of the Apostles, though they are more unpolished, there are notwithstanding some sparks of it occasionally emitted. Hence the eloquence that is suited

¹³³ *Comm. on I Cor. 1:17.*

¹³⁴ *Comm. on Heb. 1:1.*

¹³⁵ *Comm. on Gen. 2:10, 6:14, 1:14, 3:1, Exod. 7:8.*

¹³⁶ *Comm. on I Cor. 1:17.*

to the Spirit of God is of such a nature that it does not swell with empty show, or spend itself in empty sound, but is solid and efficacious, and has more of substance than elegance.¹³⁷

To sum up, we can state that, though Calvin refuses the direct imitation of rhetorical knowledge to the detailed principles of classical rhetoric, his accommodation theory reflects his creative transformation from human rhetoric into Divine rhetoric. In Divine rhetoric, there exist some continuity and discontinuity with human rhetoric. In spite of the impassible gulf of “finite and infinite” in their relation and the difference of styles which each pursues, we can find a lot of analogical relations of correspondence in their motive, strategy of adjustment, virtues of style, use of figurative language, and their parallel structure.

Second, let’s think about the influence of the Church Fathers on Calvin’s idea of accommodation. For Stephen D. Benin, accommodation pervades the Church Father’s theological ideas as a tool for their polemical, hermeneutical, and pedagogical purposes. It can be found in writers as diverse as Origen, Justin, Irenaeus, Chrysostom, Athanasius, the Cappadocians, Eusebius, and Clement of Alexandria.¹³⁸ For Calvin’s idea of accommodation, these Fathers are very influential. For example, in his final 1559 edition of the *Institutes*, Calvin cites Irenaeus whose language shows the startling parallels with Calvin’s idea of accommodation:

Irenaeus writes that the father, himself immeasurable, is measurable, is measured in the Son, for he has *accommodated* himself to our level, lest he swallow up our minds in the immensity of his glory.¹³⁹

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Benin, *Footprints*, xvi-xvii. Chapter 5. Cf. Balserak, “An Analysis of Divine Accommodation”, 5-19.

¹³⁹ *Inst.* II.vi.4.

In addition, we find that Calvin reflects Origen's idea of accommodation, too. Origen compares the accommodating God to an adult stooping to a child: "He condescends and lowers Himself accommodating Himself to our weakness, like a schoolmaster talking a 'little language' to his child, like a father caring for his children and adopting their ways."¹⁴⁰ This idea is very similar to Calvin's metaphor of "nurse and babies".¹⁴¹ Besides, we find some similarity between Origen and Calvin in their use of the concept of accommodation to explain how God can be said in the Bible to repent or change His mind:

But when the providence of God is involved in human affairs, he assumes the human mind and manner and diction. When we talk to a child of two, we talk baby talk because he is a child, for as long as we maintain the character appropriate to an adult age, and speak to children without adapting ourselves to their speech, children cannot understand us.... And if we name clothes to children we give other names to them, as if we were inventing a child's name for them. Do we suffer from arrested development when we do this? And if someone hears us talking to children, will he say, "This old man is losing his mind, this man has forgotten that his beard is grown, that he is grown-up man"? Or is it allowable for the sake of accommodation, when we are associating with a child, not to talk the language of older and mature people, but to talk in a child's language?¹⁴²

Especially, among the Church Fathers, Chrysostom influenced Calvin the most. He is called the father of accommodation,¹⁴³ with truly remarkable exegetical and rhetorical skills. For him, the concept of accommodation acquires a role almost unequaled among the other Fathers. We can easily find some clues to suggest that Calvin was indebted to Chrysostom in his theory of accommodation. For example, Calvin cites the words of Chrysostom in relation to accommodation: "For if we were incorporeal (as Chrysostom

¹⁴⁰ Frag. on Deut. 1:21. PG 17.24, quoted by P.P.C. Hanson, *Allegory and Event* (Richmond, Va.: John Knox, 1959), 226.

¹⁴¹ *Inst.* I.xiii.1.

¹⁴² Homilies on Jeremiah, 18.6, quoted by Hanson, *Allegory and Event*, 227.

¹⁴³ Benin, *Footprints*, xix.

says), he would give us these very things naked and incorporeal. Now, because we have souls engrafted in bodies, he imparts spiritual things under visible ones.”¹⁴⁴ In particular, it is intriguing to compare the following statements between Chrysostom and Calvin:

Do you see that he did many things so as to give an example? A teacher who is full of wisdom *stammers* along with his stammering young students. But the teacher's stammering does not come from a lack of learning; it is a sign of the concern he feels toward the children. In the same way, Christ did not do these things because of the lowliness of his essence; he did them as a *condescension*.¹⁴⁵

Who even of slight intelligence does not understand that God, as nurses commonly do with infants, God is wont in a measure to “*lisp*,” in speaking to us? Thus such forms of speaking do not so much express clearly what God is like as accommodate the knowledge of him to *our slight capacity*. To do this he must *descend* far beneath *his loftiness*.¹⁴⁶

These two statements show some startling parallels. The relation between teacher and children (Chrysostom) is in parallel with that of nurses and babies (Calvin). The authors have the same intention: those with the higher intelligence such as teachers or nurses are expected to adjust themselves to the persons with lower intelligence such as children or babies. Their speech is described by the Latin word, *balbutio* which is onomatopoeic term for “stammer, prattle, stutter, babble, and babble”, meaning “to speak indistinctly or obscurely with imperfect pronunciation”¹⁴⁷ Both cases reinforce God’s condescension: not because of the lowliness of this essence, but as *condescension* (Chrysostom) vs. a *descent* to be made *far below his majesty* (Calvin).

Besides, we can find a very similar idea with Calvin’s view on accommodation in Chrysostom’s interpretation of King Uzziah’s famous vision of Isaiah 6:1-2.

¹⁴⁴ *Inst.* IV.xiv.3. Here, Calvin cites 1559 edition, “*Homil. 60 ad populum*”, printed in the Basel, 1530, edition of Chrysostom’s works IV. 581.

¹⁴⁵ *St. John Chrysostom on the Incomprehensible Nature of God*, trans. Paul W. Harkins, FC, 72 (Washington, D.C., 1984), X, 2,786, quoted in Benin, *Footprints*, 70.

¹⁴⁶ *Inst.* I.xiii.1.

Why, tell me, do they stretch forth their wings and cover their faces? For what other reason than that they cannot endure the sparkling flashes nor the lightning which shines from the throne? Yet they did not see the pure light itself nor the pure essence itself. What they saw was a condescension accommodated to their nature. What is this condescension? It is when God appears and makes himself known not as he is, but in the way one incapable of beholding him is able to look upon him. In this way God reveals himself proportionally to the weakness of those who behold him.¹⁴⁸

Some of the essential ideas of Calvin are represented in the above quote regarding accommodation: (1) the connection between condescension and accommodation (condescension accommodated to their nature) and (2) the distinction between what God is and what God appears to be – “It is when God appears and makes himself known not as he is.”

However, we should be careful not to belittle Calvin’s accommodation merely as the product of these influences. It is important that, though Calvin catches the idea of accommodation from other sources, we should recognize Calvin’s creative employment of accommodation as the central principle running through his whole theology and thus he elevates the rhetorical term of accommodation into the theological term. As Dowey comments, for Calvin, “the term (of accommodation) includes within its scope all the noetic aspects of the Creator-creature relation.”¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁷ Wright, “Calvin’s Accommodating God”, 4. [Italics mine]

¹⁴⁸ *St. John Chrysostom on the Incomprehensible Nature of God*, trans. Paul W. Harkins, FC, 72 (Washington, D.C., 1984), III, 3, 722. , quoted in Benin, *Footprints*, 68.

4. The Modes of Accommodation

What modes or forms does God employ for accommodation, according to Calvin? First of all, the major modes of accommodation are deeply related to two types of knowledge: knowledge of God, the Creator and knowledge of God, the Redeemer. “First *in fashioning of the universe* and *in the general teaching of Scripture*, the Lord shows himself to be the Creator. Then *in the face of Christ* he shows himself to be the Redeemer. From this arises a two-fold knowledge of him...”¹⁵⁰ Here Calvin relates the source of the knowledge of God, the Creator, to nature (*in fashioning of the universe*) and Scripture (*the general teaching of Scripture*). Calvin, in accordance with Luther, maintains that nature and Scripture are two symmetrical focal points of God’s revelation—the former as the general revelation and the latter as the special revelation. According to Calvin’s theology, *the face of Christ* as the source of the knowledge of God the Redeemer relates to three significant modes of accommodation: the Incarnation as the birth of Christ in flesh, the Cross as the climatic event of Christ’s works in the world for our redemption, and the Word and Sacraments as Christ still living with us for our union and communion with him.

First, God accommodates to us through nature. As Battles describes, “the entire universe and all its parts are naught but a grand accommodation on God’s part of himself to the crowing glory of the creation, namely, man.”¹⁵¹ God who is invisible clothes himself in the image of the world, in which he presents himself to our observation. The universe at large functions in Calvin’s thought as ‘a book’¹⁵² or ‘mirror’¹⁵³ or the ‘theatre of God’s glory,’¹⁵⁴ to represent both himself, and his everlasting kingdom, or “the school in which

¹⁴⁹ Dowey, *The Knowledge of God in Calvin’s Theology*, 4.

¹⁵⁰ *Inst.* I.ii.1.

¹⁵¹ Battles, “God was Accommodating Himself to Human Capacity,” 19.

¹⁵² *Sermons on Job*, trans. from French by Arthur Golding (London: 1574; reprint, Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1993) 9:7-15.

¹⁵³ *Inst.* I.v.11.

¹⁵⁴ *Inst.* I.v.5.

we learn piety, and from it pass over to eternal life and perfect felicity”.¹⁵⁵ In the book of nature, God imprints his glory on the mute creation, and, as Calvin says in a lyrical passage in his preface to the Bible of Olivetan, “In every part of the world, in heaven and on earth, he has written and, as it were, engraven the glory of his power, goodness, wisdom and eternity.”¹⁵⁶ However, among these metaphors, the metaphor of theatre will be perhaps the most prevailing concept of accommodation. As Ford Lewis Battle indicates, there is a correlation between theatre and creation because just “as a stage play is itself an accommodated representation of the playwright’s inspiration and insight into human existence to the more limited vision of his audience, so in the vast theatre of heaven and earth the Divine playwright stages the ongoing drama of creation, alienation, return, and forgiveness for the teeming audience of humanity itself.”¹⁵⁷ The theatre of the world displays the glory of God’s power and wisdom; “And since the glory of his power and wisdom shines more brightly above, heaven is often called his palace [Ps. 11:4]. Wherever you cast your eyes, there is no spot in the universe wherein you cannot discern at least some sparks of his glory.”¹⁵⁸ Even the angels are astonished when they behold the glorious works of God in nature. Besides, creation reveals enough of God’s attributes shining in heaven and earth: kindness, goodness, mercy, justice, judgement, and truth.¹⁵⁹ Human beings are “formed to be spectators of the created world” and endowed with eyes to see “the world as mirror or representation of invisible things” and God leads them through contemplation to praise their Divine Author.¹⁶⁰

Second, God accommodates to us through the Bible. The Word is a mirror in which we see the secrets of Heaven more clearly and vividly, which otherwise seen would dazzle

¹⁵⁵ *Inst.* I.v.5.

¹⁵⁶ Quoted in Wendel, *Calvin*, 161.

¹⁵⁷ Battles, “God was accommodating Himself to Human Capacity”, 131.

¹⁵⁸ *Inst.* I.v.1.

¹⁵⁹ *Inst.* I.x.2.

¹⁶⁰ David C. Steinmetz, *Calvin in Context* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 29.

eyes, astonish ears and amaze minds.¹⁶¹ “In the Word, we are confronted with ‘a naked and open revelation of God.’”¹⁶² Calvin states, “In Scripture, the knowledge of God is destined for the very goal as the knowledge whose imprint shines in his creatures, in that it invites us first to fear God, then trust in him.”¹⁶³ Calvin recognizes that revelation in creation is not an effective way to reach human beings with feeble minds and blind eyes, because of their fallen nature. In the mirror of the world in which we ought to behold God, our eyes are not sufficiently clear-sighted to discern what the fabric of heaven and earth represents. Feeble humanity cannot reach God without the help of his Sacred Word, and anybody seeking God without the Word will stagger in vanity and error.¹⁶⁴ Calvin asserts that Scripture is a new remedy or a new aid for this ignorance of feeble mind with dull sight.¹⁶⁵ Scripture is a more intimate and vivid revelation of God than nature because “the knowledge of God, otherwise quite clearly set forth in the system of the universe and the creatures, is nonetheless more intimately and also more vividly revealed in his Word.”¹⁶⁶

The third and the climactic mode of accommodation is God’s Incarnation. Roland M. Frye believes that the Incarnation was “God’s ultimate accommodation” and “in the word made flesh we find the principal and central, although not the only, accommodation by God to our human condition.”¹⁶⁷ Dowey insists that this Incarnation is “God’s deepest accommodation or descent from his mysterious being, and at the same time it is both the high point of human knowledge and the limit of it.”¹⁶⁸ In Christ, the infinite God became finite for accommodation: “the Father, himself infinite, becomes finite in the Son, for he has accommodated himself to our little measure lest our minds be overwhelmed by the

¹⁶¹ *Comm. on Rom.* 10:8.

¹⁶² *Comm. on I Cor.* 13:12.

¹⁶³ *Inst.* I.x.2.

¹⁶⁴ *Inst.* I.vi.4.

¹⁶⁵ *Argument of Commentary on Genesis.*

¹⁶⁶ *Inst.* I.x.1.

¹⁶⁷ Roland M. Frye, “Calvin’s Theological Use of Figurative Language”, *Calvin Studies* IV (1993) 73-94: at 75.

¹⁶⁸ Dowey, *The Knowledge of God in Calvin’s Theology*, 251.

immensity of his glory.”¹⁶⁹ In Christ, God makes himself small, in order to lower himself to our capacity.¹⁷⁰ In the Incarnation, God’s Divinity is concealed under a veil of flesh. The abasement of the flesh was like a veil by which His Divine Majesty was concealed. Calvin describes it as the “humble clothing” hiding the true identity of the King who has laid aside all His insignia.¹⁷¹ “He assumed the form of a servant, and, contented with the humble condition, suffered His Divinity to be concealed under a veil of flesh.”¹⁷² In a sense, we can say that the Redeeming Word, which became flesh, is a special language accommodated to the aggravated condition of sinful creatureliness.¹⁷³ We find a benevolent Divine intention in the Incarnation: God is so glorious and overwhelming that the Incarnation is called for “not only to draw us near to God but to prevent us from being overwhelmed and utterly destroyed by his majesty.”¹⁷⁴ Jesus is the only way to access the dazzling light of God, and the only self-revelation of the invisible God suited to our fallen, creaturely capacity.

The fourth mode of accommodation is the Cross. Suzane Selinger indicates that the Cross, along with the Incarnation, is “the maximum accommodation and the epitome of lowering”.¹⁷⁵ Like Luther, Calvin maintains that the Cross is the striking place where the difference between the veil and reality becomes deeper: “...the treasures are hidden, because they are not seen glittering with great splendor, but do rather, as it were, lie hidden under the contemptible abasement and simplicity of the Cross”¹⁷⁶ The Cross is the form of accommodation that represents God’s medicine for us. All of us are by nature suffering from the same disease. We are branded with disgrace and ignominy. However, God does

¹⁶⁹ *Inst.* II.vi.4.

¹⁷⁰ *Comm. on Pet.* 1:20.

¹⁷¹ *Inst.* II.xiv.3.

¹⁷² *Inst.* II.xiii.2.

¹⁷³ Dowey, *The Knowledge of God in Calvin’s Theology*, 9.

¹⁷⁴ *Comm. on I Cor* 15:27-28.

¹⁷⁵ Selinger, *Calvin against Himself*, 67.

¹⁷⁶ *Comm. on Col.* 2:3.

not leave as we are. “The heavenly physician treats some more gently but others by harsher remedies.... He leaves no one free and untouched, because He knows that all, to a man, are diseased.”¹⁷⁷ The Lord restrains our flesh with “the remedy of the Cross”.¹⁷⁸

Fifth, according to Calvin, God accommodates himself in the Word and Sacraments. The Sacraments are a “token of Divine grace towards us confirmed by an outward sign”.¹⁷⁹ God provides us with spiritual things, not in direct incorporeal forms, but under visible forms, Sacraments.¹⁸⁰ Through the Word and Sacraments, God accommodates himself to our limited capacity for apprehending the Divine and veils that in Himself with which we cannot bear to directly confront.¹⁸¹ If God himself should thunder from heaven, His majesty would be intolerable to us.¹⁸² However, God decided to show his fatherly care through his Word and Sacraments, through which we can view the secrets of Heaven which human infirmity cannot stand.¹⁸³ “God has graciously condescended to stoop down to us; let us not be ashamed to give this honour to His Word and Sacraments—to behold Him there face to face.”¹⁸⁴ The Word and Sacraments are a “looking glass in which we may see that God not only dwells among us, but that He also dwells in everyone of us.”¹⁸⁵ The Lord’s Supper is “a mirror which represents to us Christ crucified”.¹⁸⁶ We can see in the Supper the sacrifice of Christ is so vividly exhibited as almost to set the spectacle of the Cross before our eyes.¹⁸⁷ At the same time, the Word and Sacraments are the mirrors of the glory of God: “The ministry of the Word, I say, is like a looking glass. For the angels have no need of preaching, or other inferior helps, nor of Sacraments, for they enjoy a

¹⁷⁷ *Inst.* III.viii.5.

¹⁷⁸ *Inst.* III.viii.5.

¹⁷⁹ *Inst.* IV.xiv.1.

¹⁸⁰ *Inst.* IV.xiv.3.

¹⁸¹ Ronald S. Wallace, *Calvin’s Doctrine of the Word and Sacrament* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1995), 22.

¹⁸² *Comm. on Deut.* 5:24.

¹⁸³ *Comm. on Rom.* 10:8.

¹⁸⁴ *CR* 8.427.

¹⁸⁵ *Sermon on 1 Tim.* 3:14-15, Cf. *Sermon on Luke* 2:1-14.

¹⁸⁶ *Comm. on 1 Cor.* 11:24.

¹⁸⁷ *Inst.* IV.xviii.1.

vision of God of another kind... We, who have not as yet reached that great height, behold the image of God as it is presented before us in the Word, in the Sacrament, and in fine in the whole service of the Church.”¹⁸⁸ The glory of God is as much brilliant through the Word and Sacraments as through the risen Christ. The light that Christ shines to the world at present is not less strong than when he was acting in the world before his death.¹⁸⁹ For Calvin, the Word and Sacraments are the way for humanity to enter into communion with God. “By the preaching of the Word and the Sacraments, we may be united to God, it becomes us to use these helps with reverence.”¹⁹⁰ The Sacraments may be called the gate of heaven, because they admit us into the presence of God.¹⁹¹

5. The Divine Strategy for Accommodation

H. Jackson Forstman suggests that in Calvin, “His view of God is so high and his view of man so low that the problem of the communication of knowledge is severe.”¹⁹² Here the question is raised: to connect the impassable gulf, what strategy does Calvin’s God employ? We can identify a few.

The first strategy is God’s *condescension*. David Wright states, “Condescension is the hallmark of all dealings that God the transcendent has had with humanity.”¹⁹³ F. L. Battles believes that “at the center of God’s accommodating himself to human capacity, however, is his supreme act of condescension, the giving of his only Son to reconcile a fallen world to himself.”¹⁹⁴ Calvin understands that for accommodation, “God must descend far

¹⁸⁸ *Comm. on I Cor.* 13:12.

¹⁸⁹ *Comm. on John* 9:5.

¹⁹⁰ *Comm. on Ps.* 24:7.

¹⁹¹ *Comm. on Gen.* 24:17.

¹⁹² Forstman, *Word and Spirit*, 9.

¹⁹³ Wright, “Calvin’s Accommodating God”, 18.

¹⁹⁴ Battles, “God Was Accommodating Himself to Human Capacity”, 119.

beneath his loftiness.”¹⁹⁵ “Our merciful Lord, with boundless condescension, so accommodated Himself to our capacity.”¹⁹⁶ This reveals that the most essential element in accommodation is God’s condescension, because accommodation would be impossible if God had not belittled Himself, taken upon Himself such a lowly form or disguise as could appeal to the capacity of man and give indication to the dull human mind of the glory and mystery of Him who has come in this form. The Divine act of ‘assuming a form we are able to bear’ means God’s belittling himself.¹⁹⁷ Revelation is the loving condescension by which God crosses the chasm between Divine and human capacities. Here, if ever, *Infinitum capax finiti*,¹⁹⁸ or, as Willis puts it, *Humanitas capax divinitatis per accommodationem*. “That is, God begins with our incapacity, makes himself small to adjust to it, and by his gracious action of strategic self-limitation, transforms us so that we are increasingly united to God himself in Christ.”¹⁹⁹ Anthropomorphic expressions in the Bible such as God’s mouth, ears, eyes, hands, and feet illustrate the way that God’s infinite essence condescends himself to a low human level.²⁰⁰ Besides, the “baby talk” God speaks to us is God’s infinite wisdom and ineffable profoundness condescended to a simple baby level. The most typical instances of God’s condescension are Christ’s Incarnation and the Cross, where God’s condescension and accommodation go hand in hand reaching a climax.

¹⁹⁵ *Inst.* I.xiii.1.

¹⁹⁶ *Inst.* IV.xiii.3.

¹⁹⁷ Benin remarks that accommodation was used interchangeably with Divine condescension by patristic writers. He discovers that most Latin sources refers to Divine actions with the verb *accomodare*, and most Greek sources employ some form of βαίνω, καταβαίνω, or συγκαταβαίνω, which basic idea he estimates is same in spite of many different expressions. Therefore, in his explanation of accommodation, these two words are interchangeably used in parallel: “the Lord *accommodates* or *condescends*, freely and benevolently, to the human level lest his salvific message go unheard and unheeded. The Lord, as it were, had to ‘come down’ to earth in order to effect the proper unfolding of his universe” [Italics mine]. Benin, *Footprints*, xv.

¹⁹⁸ Heiko Oberman argues that the phrase, *Infinitum capax finiti*, not *finitum non capax infiniti*, is characteristic of Calvin’s Christology. “The ‘Extra’ Dimension in Calvin’s Theology”, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* xxi, 1, 61f.

¹⁹⁹ Willis, “Rhetoric and Responsibility in Calvin’s Theology”, 98. For a further example of the principle of accommodation, see McGrath, *A life of John Calvin*, 130-2.

²⁰⁰ *Inst.* I.xiii.1. Here Calvin understands the anthropomorphic expressions in the Bible in terms of accommo-dation.

The glorious God condescended to be hidden under the abasement of the flesh.²⁰¹ God's accommodation is God's sacrifice for his love. God had no choice in dealing with men, but the Cross. "We must have recourse to the lower remedy that Christ may justify us by the power of his death and resurrection."²⁰² Sometimes, God may lower himself for the sake of accommodation unto the improper image of God such as drunkard, deceiver, and lover.²⁰³ The accommodating God is willing to condescend to take up drastic, humble, sometimes bizarre measures to accomplish his purposes he aspires to from his overflowing love for his creation.

The second strategy is *Divine lenity*. Divine lenity means that God does not show his own glory and majesty as he is but shows a 'levelled-down' glory and majesty, or a 'levelled-down' gradation of justice or holiness in dealing with vulnerable human nature. In his *Commentary on Exodus* 24:11-12, Calvin treats the ancient proverbial expression by Jacob, "We shall die, because we have seen God ": "So Jacob, in commendation of God's grace, says, I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved." Here Calvin asks, 'For if the mountains melt at the sight of Him, what must needs happen to a mortal man, than whom there is nothing more frail or feeble?' The key to solve this question is *Divine lenity*. "Herein, then, does God's incomparable *lenity* betray itself, when, in manifesting Himself to His elect, He does not altogether absorb and reduce them to nothing; especially when some special vision is presented to them."²⁰⁴

The third is *human lifting up*. Calvin argues that our slow minds are tied to earthly conceptions, so that we are immersed in popular delusions and secular philosophy, full of false ideas such as the Anthropomorphites who believed that God had a body like humans. These are serious errors restricting God's infinity and denigrate God's majesty and glory,

²⁰¹ *Comm. on Phil.* 2:7.

²⁰² *Inst.* III.xi.8.

²⁰³ Cf. God's image of 'drunkard' (Psalm 78:65), 'deceiver' (Ezek 14:9), 'lover' (Zep 3:17)

²⁰⁴ *Comm. on Exod.* 24:11-12.[Italics mine]

but this is the natural limitation of our minds. Hence, the immeasurable and spiritual God in the world needs to “raise us above the world” in order to “shake off our sluggishness and inertia”,²⁰⁵ so that we may have a proper knowledge of God via the mode of accommodation.

The fourth is *God's use of rhetoric*. Calvin understands God as the unsurpassable practitioner of the principles of rhetoric informing, delighting and moving human minds and hearts. Calvin never minimizes the rhetorical element of his interpretation. He recognizes the great contribution to human knowledge by jurists, philosophers, rhetoricians, physicians, and mathematics.²⁰⁶ He has a conviction that the great mysteries of Scripture cannot be understood apart from its frequent recourse to symbols, signs, and figurative expressions. These are providentially employed by God in accommodating his nature and will to human understanding. Calvin's God employs *signs or symbols*, or *visions* as his rhetoric. Signs or symbols are the accommodating methods in which the glorious and infinite God accommodates himself to our limited sense and intellectual ability. Under signs or symbols adapted to the capacity of the flesh, God enabled them to taste in part what could be fully apprehended.²⁰⁷ God veils Himself in earthly symbols to indicate to the humble and believing mind that God is present. Signs or symbols are the place we can meet God. Therefore, Calvin calls them the “face of God”. The ark and the cloud at the Red Sea are such signs as to let people feel the presence of God. “Whenever God grants any token of His Presence, He is undoubtedly present with us.”²⁰⁸ Besides, *anthropopatheia* is another rhetorical device that Calvin's God frequently resorts to. God outstretches his arms. God uses human language. God is not affected by anger, but is often described as the one who is inflamed with anger. He is expressed as the one who repents

²⁰⁵ *Inst.* I. xiii.1.

²⁰⁶ *Inst.* II.ii.15.

²⁰⁷ *Comm. on Exod.* 24:9.

²⁰⁸ *Comm. on Isa.* 6:1.

like humans. Calvin describes these anthropopathic expressions as “alien to God”. Calvin understands it in the context of the analogical character of human language about God, asserting that God “accommodates them to himself by means of analogy.”²⁰⁹

6. The Function of Calvin’s Idea of Modes of Accommodation

While, according to Luther, the functions of God’s masks are to hide, reveal, and filter, Calvin believes that the major function of the modes of accommodation is to adjust God’s reality to human capacity. This adjustment is performed by special functions of modes of accommodation.

The first is *veiling and unveiling*. In accommodation, veiling and unveiling take place simultaneously. In his *Commentary on Heb 10:20*, Calvin explains this point:

As the veil covered the recesses of the sanctuary and yet afforded an entrance there, so the Divinity, though hid in the flesh of Christ, yet leads us even to heaven; nor can anyone find God except he to whom the man Christ becomes the door and the way.²¹⁰

Here Calvin reveals that Divinity is veiled in the flesh of Christ (veiling). But to the believers who receive God as the door and way the veiled God unveil himself so that they can find God.

The second is *refracting and obscuring*, deeply related to veiling and unveiling. Even in unveiling, we cannot see God as he is. Unveiling does not mean that we can see the naked and majestic God as he is, because our feeble eye would not be able to stand it. Calvin supports this by saying that even the mighty unveiling which took place when the disciples saw the glory in their witnessing the resurrection of Jesus did not show them God

²⁰⁹ *Comm. on Ezek. 20: 8-9.*

²¹⁰ *Comm. on Heb. 10:20.*

as he is. All this is due to the limitation of human eyesight. Therefore, Calvin states, “We shall not see God as He is until we shall be like Him.”²¹¹ Then one question is raised: if the veil is drawn up, why cannot we see the naked God as he is? Is there still anything veiling him? For Calvin, unveiling does not mean that the veil is gone away. If the veil had gone away, the incarnate God would have put off his clothes of flesh. However, this did not happen even in the case of a strong unveiling moment of transfiguration or resurrection. Even in such an unveiling moment, Jesus was still wearing humanity, though it was glorified. Calvin refers to this glorified humanity as a veil. Unveiling does not mean the momentary disappearing of the veil. The unveiling happens only when we see God through the veil with the eye of faith through the illumination of the Holy Spirit. Then what is the function of the veil which prevents us from seeing God as he is at the moment of unveiling? The answer is “refracting and obscuring”. The smoke in the revelation on the death of Uzziah represents this in a typical way. In the strong moment of revelation, there was smoke filling the house which prevents Isaiah from seeing God more clearly and directly. It obscured human vision of God like a cloud. Calvin finds a deeper intention of God hidden in the symbol of smoke to prevent people’s insolent effort to “rise above the clouds, and to penetrate into the secrets of God”.²¹² This can be understood as the glass effect. The direct vision of the secrets of Heaven would dazzle our eyes. However, the Word and Sacraments are like *a looking glass*.²¹³ Instead of a direct vision of God, we enjoy the indirect vision of the image of God represented before us in the Word and Sacraments. This vision is “partaking of obscurity”.²¹⁴ Especially, Calvin emphasises that even Christ’s glorified humanity plays the role of a veil. The veil, though not completely blocking the full glory of God, refracts and obscures it even to the people of faith so that

²¹¹ *Comm. on Exod.* 33:20.

²¹² *Comm. on Isa.* 6:1-5.

²¹³ *Comm. on I Cor.* 13:12.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*

they cannot see a closer view of God. On the day when Christ hands over the kingdom to God the Father, the veil of Christ's humanity will not impede our getting a closer look of God any more.

Thus then, Christ will be subjected to the Father, because the veil being then removed, we shall openly behold God reigning in His majesty, and Christ's humanity will then no longer be interposed to keep us back from a closer view of God.²¹⁵

The third is God's *transformation*. "Since we cannot comprehend God as he is, it is necessary that, for our sake, he should, in a certain sense, *transform* himself in many passages of Scripture."²¹⁶ The Incarnation is the typical instance where the invisible and infinite God is transformed into a visible and finite human form so that our limited eyesight can grasp and understand. In many passages of Scripture, God is transformed into many figures such as dove, fire, angel, man, and so on. Because of our insensitive understanding, God goes so far as to *transform* or assume a mask alien to him such as the analogy of a drunken man.²¹⁷ Besides, in Calvin's *Commentary on Zephaniah* 3:17, God "lowers himself for our sake and *transforms* himself, as it were, assuming incongruous masks."²¹⁸

Finally, the modes of accommodation have a *pedagogical function of bridle*. In the *Institutes*, Calvin declares that, though clouds and smoke and flame [Deut. 4:11] were symbols of heavenly glory, they played the role of "a bridle place on them" to restrain the minds of all from attempting to penetrate too deeply.²¹⁹ More correctly speaking, they are *bridles for humanity*. In his *Commentary on Matt* 17:5, Calvin states that a bright cloud overshadowing the transfigured Jesus, Moses, and Elijah served us as a "bridle" to give us

²¹⁵ *Comm. on I Cor.* 15:27.

²¹⁶ *Comm. on Matt.* 23:37.

²¹⁷ *Comm. on Ps.* 78:65.

²¹⁸ *Comm. on Zep.* 3:17.

“a lesson of humility” as some “coverings to restrain the arrogance of the human mind”. Here, Calvin explains the function of “a bridle” the bright cloud plays as follows.

Lo, a bright cloud overshadowed them. Their eyes were covered by a cloud, in order to inform them, that they were not yet prepared for beholding the brightness of the heavenly glory. For, when the Lord gave tokens of his presence, he employed, at the same time, some coverings to restrain the arrogance of the human mind. So now, with the view of teaching his disciples a lesson of humility, he withdraws from their eyes the sight of the heavenly glory. This admonition is likewise addressed to us that we may not seek to pry into the secrets which lie beyond our senses, but, on the contrary, that every man may keep within the limits of sobriety, according to the measure of his faith. In a word, this cloud ought to serve us as a bridle, that our curiosity may not indulge in undue wantonness. The disciples, too, were warned that they must return to their former warfare, and therefore must not expect a triumph before the time.²²⁰

7. How the Hidden God Exists in the Modes of Accommodation

How can we understand the relation between the hidden God and his modes of accommodation? In other words, how does God exist in his masks? We can identify five key concepts in Calvin’s thought.

The first is *complete preservation*. The subtle relation between God and his mode of accommodation can be summarized as ‘complete preservation’ of God’s Divinity. That is to say, when God adjusts himself to human situation by lowering himself, God did not lose any Divine attributes such as majesty and glory, but concealed them. This suggests that God’s Divinity in his modes of accommodation are completely preserved. Calvin regards it as “fanatics’ impious fantasy” to suppose that there is a portion of Divinity, overflowing from the whole perfection of God.²²¹ This principle of complete preservation is actualized

²¹⁹ *Inst.* I.xi.3.

²²⁰ *Comm. on Matt.* 17:5. [Italics mine]

²²¹ *Inst.* II.vi.4.

by “*not lessening, but concealing*”. The Incarnation is the essential example for this. In the midst of the Incarnation, God did not abandon His heavenly glory, majesty, and throne. The whole God was in the humble form of Jesus Christ. Even when Christ emptied himself, “he continued to retain his Divinity entirely though it was concealed under the veil of his flesh.”²²² His heavenly attributes and functions were not impaired at all.

The majesty of God was not annihilated, though it was surrounded by flesh; it was indeed concealed under the low condition of the flesh, but also so as to cause its splendor to be seen.²²³

In order to prove his point, Calvin mentions other occasions when the rays of Divine glory shone through the human nature of Jesus even before the resurrection. The most striking among them is Jesus’ transfiguration. Calvin interprets it as the breaking through the veil of the flesh of a glory that had always been there: “so long as Christ remained in the world, bearing the form of a servant...nothing had been taken from him.”²²⁴ In Calvin’s interpretation, Christ did not divest himself of his Godhead, but he kept it concealed for a time, that it might not be seen under the weakness of the flesh.²²⁵ From here Calvin draws a startling conclusion that “he [Christ] laid aside his glory in the view of men, *not by lessening it, but by concealing it...*”²²⁶ The Father, although distinct in the proper nature, expresses himself in the Son. The Son is “the splendor of his glory”.²²⁷ God was there in the humble form of the Son of the Man, in all His glory and majesty. Therefore, it means that anyone who came across Jesus walking on earth, in fact, came across the complete God in fullness. The whole God in Christ continued to fulfill all his heavenly functions undiminished.

²²² *Comm. on Matt. 17:9.*

²²³ *Comm. on John 1:14.*

²²⁴ *Comm. on Matt. 17:1.*

²²⁵ *Comm. on Phil. 2:7.*

²²⁶ *Comm. on Phil. 2:7. [Italics mine]*

The second is *no confinement*. God is not enclosed in signs. Even if the limitless God accommodates himself to the limited signs of accommodation, it does not mean that God's infinity or Divinity is limited. Though the boundless essence of the Word was united with human nature in one person, Calvin is against the idea that the incarnate God must have been enclosed in the narrow tenement of an earthly body.

Although the infinite essence of the Word is united in one person with the nature of man, yet we have *no idea of its incarceration or confinement*. For the Son of God descended miraculously from heaven, yet without abandoning heaven; was pleased to be conceived miraculously in the virgin's womb, to live upon the earth, and hang upon the Cross, and yet always filled the world as from the beginning.²²⁸

Here Calvin clearly insists we have *no idea of its incarceration or confinement* in the Incarnation. This speaks of God's transcendence. Calvin indicates that the God who appears enclosed within human flesh, in fact, fills up the whole universe, transcending the limitation of his body. This is the miraculous existential mode that shows how God exists in his accommodation: for Calvin, God cannot be locked up within any sign intended as the mode of accommodation. A famous Christmas hymn, attributed to St. Germanus, expresses this point of Calvin in a succinct way: "The Word becomes incarnate, and yet remains on high!"²²⁹ The ark is another example. It is the sign of God's presence. However, Calvin indicates that God was not confined within the sign. "The name of Jehovah is here applied to the ark; for although the essence or majesty of God was not shut up in it, nor did His power and operation fix to it, yet it was not a vain and idle symbol of His presence."²³⁰ Though Moses states that God was in the cloud and in the pillar of fire, Calvin interprets that "yet does he (Moses) not wish to draw Him down from heaven, nor to subject His

²²⁷ *Inst.* I.xiii.2.

²²⁸ *Inst.* II.xiii.4. [Italics mine]

²²⁹ McGrath, *A Life of John Calvin*, 162.

infinite glory to visible signs, with which His truth may consist without His local presence.”²³¹

The third is *distinctio sed non separatio* (distinguished but not separated). Though there is an inseparable relation between God and his modes of accommodation, they are distinguished. For Calvin, this became the formula of *distinctio sed non separatio*. The essential paradigm is the Incarnation. In it, God is united with humanity. But how and in what way? Calvin’s idea for this is described in his *Commentary on John* 1:14, “the Word was made flesh”:

If anything like this very great mystery can be found in human affairs, the most apposite parallel seems to be that of man, whom we see to consist of two substances. Yet neither is so mingled with the other as not to retain its own distinctive nature. For the soul is not the body, and the body is not the soul.

This passage emphasises the distinction between God and his modes of accommodation, which is strongly supported by the words: “the soul is not body” and “the body is not soul.” There are some exclusive elements which do not apply to the other. This is applicable to creation. In creation, there is a clear distinction between God and nature as God’s accommodating place. God is in all creation and all creation is in God. However, they are not mingled but keep each own distinctive property. A real, spiritual presence is represented by the physical appearance, but the two are not identified. Calvin claims that identifying God with his modes of accommodation is the origin of idol worship. In a dispute between Luther and Zwingli over the nature of the Sacraments in 1520s, Luther maintains that the Eucharistic bread and wine really are the body and blood of Jesus Christ. Zwingli, on the other, claims that they are merely symbols of the body and blood of Christ.

²³⁰ *Comm. on Ps.* 47:6.

²³¹ *Comm. on Exod.* 13:21.

Luther holds that the Sacramental sign is equivalent to what it signified; Zwingli insists that sign and the signified are radically different. Calvin's position is between the two extremes. Calvin argues that there is a close connection between the Sacramental symbol and the spiritual gift it symbolizes. While the sign is visible and physical, the thing signified is invisible and spiritual, yet the connection between the sign and the signified is so intimate that it is permissible to apply the one to the other.²³² Calvin has the idea that the relation between symbol—bread and wine— and the things signified—the body of Christ— are united by Holy Spirit, though they are separated in space, but not identical as Catholics insists on. In spite of their unity, signs and things signified are distinguished.²³³ Here we find Calvin's Christologically grounded formula *distinctio sed non separatio* prevailing. Ronald S. Wallace, citing Calvin's words on the mystery of Sacramental union, "The signs and the things signified are not disjoined but distinct",²³⁴ believes that Calvin "is concerned to maintain a middle course between Papists who confound the reality and the sign and profane men who separate the signs from the realities."²³⁵ McGrath, too, supports this idea, saying, "Throughout his works, Calvin displays a pervasive tendency to radically distinguish between the human and Divine realms—yet insist upon their unity. There is no possibility whatsoever of dividing God and the world, or God and human beings."²³⁶

The fourth concept is that God's hiddenness is *not exhausted by revelation*. Before the book of nature, Job looks at the "face of God" in the glass of creation. The mirror of creation reveals the majesty and power of God. However, in spite of this revelation, Calvin realizes that human beings can never fully comprehend the wonders of the cosmos. The miraculous aspects of the cosmos still transcend our comprehension and leave us with a

²³² *Inst.* IV.xvii.21.

²³³ *Inst.* IV.xvii.34.

²³⁴ *CR* 9:18. , quoted in Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Word and Sacrament*, 165.

²³⁵ Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Word and Sacrament*, 165.

²³⁶ McGrath, *A Life of John Calvin*, 149.

“glimpse” or “taste” of Divine providence.²³⁷ With our “open eyes”, we cannot reach God’s wisdom hidden behind nature: “we must always conclude that the wisdom of God is hidden from us (in all these clear things) and that there is some cause above us to which we cannot attain.”²³⁸ What we can know in history and nature we know only “in part”: “We know in part, and we see as by a mirror, and in a riddle” (1 Cor. 13:9-12). Here, the words, “in part”, suppose that there is a hidden part we do not know. It is true that, while we are in this mortal flesh, we may never penetrate so far into the deepest secrets of God as to have nothing hidden from us.²³⁹ The whirlwind speech in Job teaches us that there is an inscrutable wisdom of God in the heart of nature which far surpasses nature itself. We cannot grasp or understand all the wonders and secrets of the Divine judgement in history. Hiddenness permeates revelation. Calvin says that revelation without hiddenness would amount to knowing God face to face. However, that will not come until the last day when we will be like him.²⁴⁰

Fifth, in relation to God’s existence in his modes of accommodation, we find *some overlapping of Hiddenness I and Hiddenness II*. In Calvin, God is hidden in accommodation. God hidden in accommodation is God in Hiddenness I. Like Luther, Calvin supposes that the hidden God wears masks and clothes when interacting with creation. The accommodated God reveals himself only to the faithful. Without the Holy Spirit’s illumination, revelation cannot be revelation. However, unlike Luther, in Calvin, there are some places where Hiddenness I and Hiddenness II overlap in the form of accommodation. If we penetrate the hidden mask of the accommodated God, we will find another deeper hiddenness of God. The typical intersection of Hiddenness I and Hiddenness II is the Cross. At the surface level, the Cross is the place God accommodated

²³⁷ Susan E. Schreiner, *Where Shall Wisdom Be Found?* (Chicago, London: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), 145. Cf. CO 35:383-84, 403, 429.

²³⁸ *Sermons on Job* 38:16-32.

²³⁹ *Comm. on 1 Tim* 6:16.

²⁴⁰ *Comm. on Exod.* 33:20.

himself to reveal himself, which makes it belong to Hiddenness I. However, at a deeper level, the Cross is the place the Hiddenness II is still lurking. Calvin indicates that, in spite of the brilliant revelation of the Cross, the deep hiddenness of predestination is also present in the Cross. The Cross carries the depth of God's most secret judgement concerning predestination. Therefore, Calvin uses the metaphor, "abyss of the Cross".

And God, to show forth his liberality more fully in such a glorious gift, does not bestow it upon all indiscriminately, but by a singular privilege gives it to those to whom he will. We have above cited testimonies of this. Augustine, the faithful interpreter of them, exclaims: "Our Savior, to teach us that belief comes as a gift and not merit, says: 'No one comes to me, unless my Father. . . draw him' [John 6:44 p.], and ' . . . it be granted him by my Father' [John 6:65 p]. It is strange that two hear: one despises, the other rises up! Let him who despises impute it to himself; let him who rises up not arrogate it to himself." In another passage he says: "Why is it given to one and not to another? I am not ashamed to say: 'This is the depth of the Cross.' Out of some depth or other of God's judgements, which we cannot fathom... comes forth all that we can do... I see what I can do; I do not see whence I can do it except that I see this far: that... it is of God. But why one and not the other? This means much to me. It is *an abyss, the depth of the Cross*. I can exclaim in wonder; I cannot demonstrate it through disputation."²⁴¹

8. Accommodation and the Idol

The proper understanding of Calvin's accommodation calls for the distinction between accommodation and the idol. In spite of their similar aspects, some serious differences exist. What is the danger of an idol? We need to know what Calvin says about the origin of the idol worship. In the *Institutes*, Calvin sharply points out where the danger of the idol comes from:

²⁴¹ *Inst.* III.ii.35.

Meanwhile, since this brute stupidity gripped the whole world—to pant after visible figures of God, and thus to form gods of wood, stone, gold, silver, or other dead and corruptible matter we must cling to this principle: *God's glory is corrupted* by an impious falsehood whenever any form is attached to him. Therefore in the law, after having claimed for himself alone the glory of deity, when he would teach what worship he approves or repudiates. God soon adds, "You shall not make for yourself a graven image, nor any likeness" [Exod. 20:41]. By these words he restrains our waywardness from trying to represent him by any visible image, and briefly enumerates all those forms by which superstition long ago began to turn his truth into falsehood.²⁴²

Here Calvin summarizes the fundamental danger which idols entail in a simple aphorism: *God's glory is corrupted*. In other places, Calvin emphatically reiterates the similar danger inherent in idol worship: "*God's majesty is sullied*,"²⁴³ "*dishonorable to his majesty*,"²⁴⁴ "*defacing his glory*,"²⁴⁵ or "*God's majesty...debased*."²⁴⁶ How about God's accommodation? Calvin suggests that some similar aspect lurks in God's accommodation, because accommodation accompanies the degradation from glory, though not corruption of glory. Regarding the burning bush, Calvin says that God "descended in some way from his majesty."²⁴⁷ Calvin states that when God is compared to a mother and a hen, God descended far below his glory: "When he compares himself to a mother, he *descends very far below his glory*; how much more when he takes the guise of a hen, and deigns to treat us as his chickens?"²⁴⁸ We cannot deny that the idol and accommodation have the similar feature that God's glory is dragged down: degradation of God's glory.

Another similar feature is that both are improper to God's nature. In the case of an idol, Calvin says that every idol contradicts his being: "every statue man erects, or every

²⁴² *Inst.* I.xi.1.

²⁴³ *Inst.* I.xi.2.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁵ *Inst.* I.xi.12

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁷ *Comm. on Exod.* 3:2.

²⁴⁸ *Comm. on Matt.* 23:37.

image he paints to represent God, simply displeases God as something *dishonorable to his majesty*.”²⁴⁹ God’s majesty is “sullied by unfitting and absurd fiction, when the incorporeal is made to resemble corporeal matter, the invisible a visible likeness, the spirit an inanimate object, the immeasurable a puny bit of wood, stone, or gold [Isa. 40:18-20 and 41:7; 45:9; 46:5-7].”²⁵⁰ To sum up, “images (of God) are not suited to represent God’s mystery.”²⁵¹ How about accommodation? In accommodation, too, we can see the similar aspects. In Psalms 78:65, God compares himself to a drunken man. Calvin understands that God’s image had fallen from his utmost dignity here. In his *Commentary on Zep.* 3:17, God is compared to “a husband consumed with love for his wife”. Here Calvin comments, “Nothing is more improper (to God’s nature).”²⁵²

However, what is more important, in spite of these similar elements, there is fundamental and radical differences between accommodation and the idol.

First, while the idol intends to drag God downwards to stand on a human level, accommodation intends to raise us up from the earthly world to the heavenly mystery: “It pleases the Lord to employ earthly elements, as vehicles for raising the minds of men on high.”²⁵³ There is a benevolent intention in God’s chosen signs to lead his people to seize the spiritual gift in the sign which God offers by God’s grace to grasp something transcendent beyond the sign.

Second, a fundamental difference between accommodation and the idol is *who the subject is*. When *we* try to make an image for God, it is an idol because it degrades God’s glory. For Calvin, the idol worshipper sins by transferring God’s majesty and glory to “creature and graven image” against which God will vindicate his majesty and glory.²⁵⁴

²⁴⁹ *Inst.* I.xi.2.[Italics mine]

²⁵⁰ *Inst.* I.xi.2.

²⁵¹ *Inst.* I.xi.3.

²⁵² *Comm. on Zep.* 3:17.

²⁵³ *Comm. on Gen.* 9:13.

²⁵⁴ *Inst.* II.viii.18.

However, when *God* accommodates himself into images such as visible bread and wine, it is not an idol in spite of improper depiction of God's nature. When *we* try to make incomprehensible God comprehensible, it is license. However, when *God* tries to make his incomprehensibility comprehensible, it is called a beneficial grace. In a word, the absolute standard to decide whether something is an idol or not is who invented it, God himself or humans. In this context, we can fully agree with David Wright's opinion that "the responsibility for the use of the image is left with God—he is agent of accommodation."²⁵⁵ It is God's own area to decide, not a fallible humanity.

Third, in accommodation, unlike the idol, we find God's true presence; that is, God is with us in the modes of accommodation. For instance, in the vision of Uzziah, the vision is not literally accurate, because God never appeared as he is in Himself. The vision is a vision accommodated for our understanding. What is striking is that unlike the idol, in accommodation as the token of his presence, "he (God) is undoubtedly with us."

Hence we learn a profitable doctrine, that whenever God grants any token of his presence, *he is undoubtedly present with us*, for he does not amuse us by unmeaning shapes, as men wickedly disfigure him by their contrivances. Since, therefore, that exhibition was no deceitful representation of the presence of God, Isaiah justly declares that he saw him.²⁵⁶

Accommodation is God's chosen way and the vision in accommodation is in no way a false symbol of the presence of God, but represents the true presence of God as Calvin says that Isaiah is right in asserting that he saw God. God's chosen way is a crucial point, because, as Ronald Wallace indicates, in his act of choosing, God's serious purpose is to prevent humans from "fixing" God under self-chosen and powerless forms.²⁵⁷ Idol worship tends to commit the sin to "drag God down to earth" and to make out of the truth

²⁵⁵ Wright, "Calvin's Accommodating God", 8.

²⁵⁶ *Comm. on Isa. 6:1-5*. [Italics mine]

²⁵⁷ Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Word and Sacrament*, 78-79.

of God a caricature of God in the form of an idol that human beings would be able to master, and manipulate according to their own self will.²⁵⁸ The idol is saturated with human perverted will, not God's will. All problem comes from this perverted human mind, "so stupid that whenever they figure God they fix Him",²⁵⁹ which "stuffed as it is with presumptuous rashness, dares to imagine a God suited to its own capacity."²⁶⁰

Fourth, the idol is basically permeated with the perverted mind to *equalize* God with creation. Calvin's view is that God is in creation, but God is not creation. But the fault of idol worship is in human blurring this clear distinction between God and creation and equalizing them. For Calvin, even God's chosen sign of accommodation has some danger to be misused as idols. It is not the problem of the sign, but the perverted mind to misuse the sign.

There were, no doubt, various appearances under which God made himself known to the holy fathers in ancient times; but in all cases he refrained from using signs which might induce them to make for themselves idols.²⁶¹

The typical example is the Ark. The Ark is clearly God's chosen sign to represent God's presence. But God warned them not to worship the Ark itself rather than God himself.

Although the Lord intended that the Ark should be a testimony of His presence, yet he forbade these Jews to fix their whole and exclusive attention upon it, but commanded them to raise their eyes to heaven, and there to seek and adore God.²⁶²

In fact, through history the Ark was worshipped as an idol, which proves that even in God's chosen symbol, the perverted human mind can degrades it into idol. Idol worship

²⁵⁸ Ibid. 78.

²⁵⁹ *Inst.* I.xi.9.

²⁶⁰ *Inst.* I.xi.8.

²⁶¹ *Comm. on Matt.* 17:5

²⁶² *Comm. on Isa.* 46:2

lies in the mind of the perceiver. Therefore, we need wisdom to distinguish the modes of accommodation and idols not to deprive God of his glory and thus let God be God and creature to be creature.

In conclusion, the purpose of this chapter was to investigate various aspects of Calvin's God in accommodation so that it may be compared with Luther's Hiddenness I. In order to reach this purpose, we explored them through eight sections. In Section 1, on the question why God accommodate himself, we found that God accommodates himself because of God's transcendence characterized as "immortal, infinite, and eternal", his holiness, and overwhelming majesty and glory, for the purpose that he wants to save his elect and raise them up to heaven, reveal himself, be *familiariter*, and bring them to the maturity he wills for them. In Section 2, we examined that God considers the human *captus* such as limited human understanding, human infirmity, human sinfulness, human barbarity, human culture. In Section 3, as for Calvin's Theological Employment of Accommodation, we can say that though Calvin did not invent the concept of accommodation, he used it for his theology in a creative way. In his theological employment of the concept, Calvin was influenced by human rhetoric and Church Fathers, especially, Chrysostom. In Section 4, we investigated five modes of accommodation: nature, the Bible, the Incarnation, the Cross, and the Word and Sacrament. In Section 5, we explored several strategies God employs to connect the impassable gulf. Those strategies are God's condescension, Divine lenity, human lifting up, God's use of rhetoric such as symbol and visions, and metaphors, etc. In Section 6, we investigated several functions of the modes of accommodation: adjusting God's reality to human capacity, refracting and obscuring, transformation, and pedagogical function as a bridle of humanity. In Section 7, we found that the hidden God exists in the mode of accommodation in the way of complete preservation, no confinement, *distinctio sed non separatio*, no exhaustion by revelation,

and some overlapping of Hiddenness I and Hiddenness II. In Section 8, in the relation between accommodation and the idol, we can say that though there is some similarity between them in that God's glory is detracted in accommodation, and corrupted in the idol, we can find some fundamental difference in terms of the Divine intention in it, the subject to choose them, the possibility for us to meet God's presence in them, and human perverted equalization. Based on the above, we can say that Calvin has a well-developed and systematic structure of the hidden God doctrine based on accommodation, sharing many similar points with Luther's hidden God doctrine. Now it is time to turn our attention to the comparison of Hiddenness I in Luther and Calvin, which is one of the main purposes of this thesis.

Conclusion of Part A: Comparison of Hiddenness I in Luther and Calvin

In Chapter I and Chapter II, we investigated and compared Luther and Calvin on Hiddenness I, which refers to God in revelation and accommodation. Fundamentally, these chapters form the basis for the analysis of the relation between God hidden and revealed, in Part C. To this end, we centered our inquiry on Luther's God in the mask and Calvin's God in accommodation. In Chapter I, the various aspects of Luther's hidden God in the mask were concretely investigated; the reason why God hides; the development of the hidden God in Luther's theology and his works; the main masks of God; how the hidden God works in the mask (*abscondita sub contrariis*); the nature of the mask and its function (hiding to reveal); and how the hidden God exists in the mask. Similarly, in Chapter II, we have examined the various aspects of Calvin's God in accommodation specifically: the reason why God accommodates himself, the human *captus* considered in accommodation, Calvin's theological employment of accommodation, the modes of accommodation, the Divine strategy for accommodation, the function of Calvin's idea of modes of accommodation, how the hidden God exists in the modes of accommodation, and, finally, the relation between accommodation and the idol. As a result of our inquiry we found that Calvin has an astonishing hidden God doctrine based on accommodation, which shares much with Luther but at the same time is theologically distinct. In Part B, we are going to turn our attention to the God hidden beyond revelation. Part A and Part B will illuminate our comparison of the relation, in Part C, between God hidden and revealed in Luther and Calvin.

We can now compare the hiddenness of God in revelation between Luther and Calvin based on chapters I and II. The first point to make is that both Calvin's "accommodation"

and Luther's "mask" show not what God is, but what God appears to be. At one level, for Calvin, the accommodated God is a God who is at once revealed and hidden. At another level, there is a completely hidden God beyond accommodation without revelation. The former comprises God hidden in accommodation and the latter God hidden in an abyss. The hiddenness in accommodation comes from God's self-limitation represented in his prattling. The accommodating God is accustomed to prattling with us like nurses with babies. This form of prattling (*balbutire*) provides us with the accommodated knowledge of God rather than the clear picture of what God is.²⁶³ This accommodated knowledge is a self-limited knowledge. God's appearance is not exactly the same as what God is. Therefore, it follows that God's hiddenness is based on the discrepancy between reality and appearance. David Wright rightly points out that this hiddenness is caused by accommodation, which is, in a sense, already entailed in the Divine act of accommodation. Divine accommodation "both reveals and conceals." Its "double-edged force" is nicely contained in the verb *balbutire*.²⁶⁴

The revealed God is always still for Calvin the partly hidden God, for all knowledge of God is accommodated knowledge—which means knowledge tailored to our measure and hence knowledge curtailed. We must make do with the prattling of God until hereafter he speaks to us face to face.²⁶⁵

This is the very point of convergence that Luther's hidden God's mask shares with Calvin's idea of accommodation, in that Luther's mask does not show what God is, but what God appears to us to be. Besides, Luther's mask just provides knowledge of "God's back", not of "God's face", which indicates limited and curtailed knowledge of God, just

²⁶³ *Inst.* I. xiii.1.

²⁶⁴ Wright, "Calvin's Accommodating God", 4. Here, David Wright shows that this term can be translated into "prattle, lisp, stammer, stutter, and babble".

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 19.

as Calvin's accommodated God demonstrates. From this basic point, we can proceed to a deeper comparison.

Luther and Calvin both understand that we cannot directly see God. Luther insists that humanity simply cannot bear exposure to the glory of Divine Majesty. Luther's God does not encounter human beings in naked majesty. The brilliance of his glory is too terrible to bear. We shall not see God face to face as he is in his deity, majesty, and glory. Likewise, in Calvin, God is so incomprehensible and mysterious beyond our understanding, and so holy, majestic, and glorious that we cannot see him directly: "...we imprisoned as it were in our bodies, cannot behold God's glory freely and directly."²⁶⁶

Luther and Calvin keep the paradoxical principle that God hides himself to reveal himself. Luther declares that "man hides his own things, in order to conceal them; God hides his own things, in order to reveal them."²⁶⁷ Calvin's God as well hides himself to accommodate and reveal himself. The flesh of Christ conceals as a veil the majesty of God but it conducts us to the enjoyment of all good things of God.²⁶⁸ God takes symbolic forms upon Himself in the act of revealing Himself. The symbolic forms can be thought of as a veil, through the putting on of which the light of the glory of God is obscured, yet transmitted to the holder. The signs, as the veil which God conceals his presence on the scene of human affairs, are confessed to be the very means whereby God "discovered His presence."²⁶⁹ In this regard, Calvin speaks of revelation as indirect illumination.²⁷⁰

Luther and Calvin share the idea that that hiddenness and revelation go together in Hiddenness I. For Luther, God's revelation is "concealed revelation", because through masks, it is not discernable to anyone, only visible by the Holy Spirit through faith. Only

²⁶⁶ *Comm. on Exod.* 33:21.

²⁶⁷ *WA* 1.138.13-15. (*Resolutiones disputationum de indulgentiarum virtute*, 1518): "*Theologus crucis (est de deo crucifixo et abscondito loquens).*"

²⁶⁸ *Comm. on Heb.* 10:20.

²⁶⁹ *Inst* I.xiii.1

²⁷⁰ *Comm. on Exod.* 33:21.

“friends of the Cross” know that beneath the humility and shame of the Cross lie the concealed power and glory of God—but to others, this insight is denied.²⁷¹ Calvin insists that the hiddenness in accommodation takes on the characteristics of Luther’s Hiddenness I—the coexistence of hiddenness and revelation, because the secrets of God are not open to all, but only to a part of people with faith who can access his will made known in Scripture. For Calvin, accommodation does not mean that God loses his mysteries. With all his revelation, mysteries still remain.

Further, Luther and Calvin share the idea that the mask and accommodation show the relation of the means and an end. Masks are used for the purpose of accommodation. For Luther, the mask is the way of accommodation. Luther follows Augustine, believing that God is the God who accommodates himself to human capacity. Luther insists, “God lowers himself to the level of our weak comprehension and presents himself to us in images, coverings, as it were, in simplicity adapted to a child, that in some measure it may be possible for him to be known by us.”²⁷² For Luther, masks are what God invented to accommodate himself to us.

We know no other God than the God clothed with his promises. If he should speak to me in his majesty, I would run away—just as the Jews did. However, when he is clothed in the voice of man and accommodates himself to our capacity to understand, I can approach him.²⁷³

Likewise, Calvin believes that the most effective method for God to accommodate himself is to wear a mask and veil. Calvin sometimes uses the metaphors of a mask or veil. Both are interchangeably used. He says, “God’s providence does not always meet us in its naked

²⁷¹ Ibid.

²⁷² *LW* 2.45. (Gen 6:5-6)

²⁷³ *WA* 40^{II}.329 f. (Psalm 51:1) Cf. *LW* 12.312 f. (Psalm 51:1) [Italics mine]

form, but God in a sense clothes it with the means employed.”²⁷⁴ Calvin understands that a mask or veil is the instrument for accommodating himself to insensitive and blind sensibility. Calvin indicates God’s mask clearly: “Had they been of a pure and refined understanding, God would not have thus transformed himself or assumed *a mask (personam)* alien to him.”²⁷⁵ This is reminiscent of Luther’s mask, his favorite metaphor, which stands for multifarious masks, veils and coverings in God’s revealing himself.²⁷⁶ The word, “alien”, in particular, relates to Luther’s concept of the mask. In Calvin’s *Commentary on Psalm 90:16*, God assumes an alien role, pretending to be someone other than he really is, when he withdraws himself from the Church, while in reality he is working to protect the Church.²⁷⁷

Both Luther and Calvin think that nature merely provides knowledge of God’s existence and attributes. Luther defines what natural reason can arrive at: “that there must be only one eternal, Divine essence, which has created, which sustains and governs, all things.”²⁷⁸ Luther shares with the traditional view that by virtue of reason human beings can know that there is one God, that all good comes from God, that he is not only powerful, but also kind, gracious, merciful, tender-hearted.²⁷⁹ Like Luther, Calvin believes that the created world demonstrates God’s existence. Calvin declares, “Men one and all perceive that there is a God and he is their Maker.”²⁸⁰ The world is a mirror of God’s glory which reveals enough of God’s will and nature to stimulate human being to praise and glorify God.²⁸¹

However, both understand that we cannot know God’s essence through nature. For

²⁷⁴ *Inst.* I.vii.4.

²⁷⁵ *Comm. on Ps.* 78:65.

²⁷⁶ Cf. *LW* 6:142. (*Gen* 32:29) Here, Luther insists that the person who wrestled with Jacob is none other than our Lord Jesus Christ in the form of flesh.

²⁷⁷ *Comm. on Ps.* 90:16.

²⁷⁸ *WA* 21.509. (*Am Sontag Trinitatis Epistel Röm* 11:33-36)

²⁷⁹ Cf. *WA* 41¹. 607.5-10. (*Gal* 4:8); See also Gerrish, *Grace and Reason*, 15.

²⁸⁰ *Inst.* I.iii.1.

Luther, a natural human wisdom knows that there is a God, even his general attributes such as God's glory and majesty, but it has never yet been able to conceive what God is within himself and what the nature of his internal essence is.²⁸² In other words, we can know about God, but we cannot know God. Likewise, Calvin demonstrates unity with Luther in this respect. Calvin repeats the incomprehensibility of God's nature in many places: "his essence is incomprehensible; hence, his Divineness far escapes all human perception"²⁸³; God's "nature is incomprehensible, and remotely hidden from human understanding"²⁸⁴; "Our understanding is not capable of comprehending his essence"²⁸⁵ Further, "how can the human mind measure of measureless essence of God according to its own little measure...?" Thus Calvin asks us to "willingly leave to God the knowledge of himself".²⁸⁶

Both focus on what we might call the "eye problem" as the main hindrance to the true knowledge of God in nature.²⁸⁷ Luther and Calvin are of the opinion that while the

²⁸¹ *Inst.* I.v.1.

²⁸² *WA*, 21.509. (*Am Sonntag Trinitatis Epistel Röm 11:33-36*)

²⁸³ *Inst.* I.v.1.

²⁸⁴ *CR* 5.324 (the Catechism of 1538)

²⁸⁵ *CR* 6.16.

²⁸⁶ *Inst.* I.xiii.21.

²⁸⁷ Karl Barth shows a sharp disagreement with Emil Brunner on the issue of natural theology in Calvin. While Brunner insists that in Calvin's view, the image of God had not been completely destroyed by human sin and disobedience. Some images still remain in human nature, working as the contact point for the knowledge of God, Barth gives an harsh answer of "Nein!" saying that the possibility of a real knowledge by natural man of the true God, derived from creation, just indicates a possibility in principle, but not in fact, not a possibility to be realized by us. See *Natural Theology*, trans. Peter Fraenkel (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1946), for Brunner's *Nature and Grace* and Barth's *No!*; Dowey, *The Knowledge of God in Calvin's Theology*, appendix 3; G. C. Berkouwer, *General Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), Chapter 2 and 3; Steinmets, *Calvin in Context* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 23-39; Willis, *Calvin's Catholic Christology* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1966), 101-131. However, Bouwsma, though he has found impressive evidence for a kind of natural theology in Calvin's thought, nevertheless concludes that the debate between Brunner "for whom Calvin left a large place for the knowledge of God, and Barth, "for whom he left little and none", is futile because of Calvin's ambivalence; he can be cited on both sides of the issue." See Bouwsma, *John Calvin: A Sixteenth Century Portrait*, 262. Here Bouwsma refers to Sermon No 43 on Job, 531-532 for one of Calvin's more balanced statements.

revelation in creation is clear enough to drive all people to worship and praise him, human reason is so totally corrupted and blinded that it is unable to get the true knowledge of God. Luther states that our reason is in complete darkness about the Divine matter.²⁸⁸ Likewise, Calvin expresses that “so many burning lamps shine for us in the workmanship of the universe to show forth the glory of its Author.”²⁸⁹ However, Calvin insists that, in spite of clear revelation in nature, our blindness hinders us from getting to the clear revelation of God through creation: “even if the invisible Divinity is made manifest in such spectacles, we have not the eyes to see this unless they be illuminated by the inner revelation of God through faith.”²⁹⁰ Both distinguish sharply between what is offered to natural reason and what is received. Though all the creation clearly shows God’s glory and majesty and wisdom, human eyes are blind, which prevents us from getting the true knowledge of God. Their common, central message is that the difficulty is with human misconception, distorted by sin. Therefore, Luther and Calvin recognize that we *could* get to the substantial knowledge of God through the book of nature, “were it not for the fact of human sin.” Luther expresses this conditional in his *Table Talk*, “*If only Adam had not sinned*, men would have recognized God in all creatures, would have loved and praised Him so that in the smallest blossom they would have seen and pondered His power, grace wisdom.”²⁹¹ Calvin, too, expresses this conditional by asserting that the knowledge of God would only be fully real for us if Adam had not been fallen but had “remained upright.”²⁹² Both affirm that true knowledge of God is only possible through the Holy Spirit. Luther believes that “you cannot know what I am thinking unless, by word or sign, I enable you to understand it, much less can we see and know what God is in His own secret essence until the Holy Spirit reveals it to us.”²⁹³ Like Luther, Calvin has the view that we can see the

²⁸⁸ *Dr. Martin Luthers Werke: Tischreden*, 6 vols (Weimar, 1912-21) vol. 3. no.2938a

²⁸⁹ *Inst.* I.v.14.

²⁹⁰ *Inst.* I.v.14.

²⁹¹ *D. Martin Luthers Werke: Tischreden*, 6 vols (Weimar, 1912-21), no 4201. vol. 4. p.197-8. [Italics mine]

²⁹² *Inst.* I.ii.1.

²⁹³ *WA* 21, 509. (*Am Sonntag Trinitatis Epistel Röm.* 11:33-36)

invisible Divinity made manifest in nature through the illumination by the inner revelation of God through faith.²⁹⁴ For Calvin, that blindness or an acute weak vision²⁹⁵ can be corrected by the light of faith and the spectacles of Scripture.

To Luther and Calvin, true knowledge of God is soteriological. Luther clearly indicates this point by saying that the true knowledge includes “what God thinks of us, what his will is towards us, what he will give or what he will do to *the end we may be delivered from sin and death and be saved*.”²⁹⁶ Calvin shares Luther’s idea that true knowledge should entail the saving knowledge. In Calvin’s words, ‘where He [God] has shone, we possess Him by faith and, therefore, we also enter into the possession of *life*, and this is why the *knowledge* of Him is truly and justly called *saving* or bringing *salvation*.’²⁹⁷ The *Institutes* begins with an Augustinian theological premise that knowledge of God depends upon, proceeds from, and is interwoven with self-knowledge. This premise leads us to the concept of saving knowledge, for “the miserable ruin, into which the rebellion of the first man cast us, especially compels us to look upward.”²⁹⁸ Our understanding of sin and our despicable state damned by God naturally invites knowledge of Christ as Redeemer, which is the answer to the problem of sin and its curse.

In spite of these general similarities, if we go deeper, we find some delicate divergence between Luther and Calvin on the hypothetical, not actual, premise as to “the prime and simple knowledge” that would have been given to us through nature “if Adam had remained upright.”²⁹⁹ Would natural knowledge provide us the knowledge of salvation, if we had not been blind and our reason perfect? Did God scatter his saving knowledge in

²⁹⁴ *Inst.* I.v.14.

²⁹⁵ Steinmetz, *Calvin in Context*, 29. Here Steinmetz indicates that the metaphor of blindness is too strong. According to him, Calvin realizes that the blindness overstates Paul’s case and retreats to the metaphor of severely damaged sight, citing “We are not so blind that we can plead ignorance without being convicted of perversity.” (T.H.L. Parker, *Iohannis Calvini Commentarius in Epistolam Pauli ad Romanos* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1981), 30.

²⁹⁶ *A Commentary on St. Paul’s Epistle to Galatians*, ed. Erasmus Middleton (London, 1807), 277f. [Italics mine]

²⁹⁷ *Comm. on John* 17:3 [Last two Italics mine]

²⁹⁸ *Inst.* I.i.1

nature, even though our blind eye cannot see it?

First, let's think about Calvin. At times, he appears to answer in the negative tone. "Natural reason will never direct men to Christ";³⁰⁰ "...natural theology which exists solely for the purpose of making us inexcusable is to be *sharply distinguished from saving knowledge of God*";³⁰¹ "After the ruin of Adam, no knowledge of God could be profitable to *salvation* without a mediator."³⁰² However, we should notice that these statements presuppose the practical state of our corrupted nature whose "deficiency of natural ability prevents us from attaining the pure and clear knowledge of God."³⁰³ If we proceed into the *hypothetical* area of "if Adam had not fallen", and gather clues which Calvin scattered here and there, we discover that Calvin suggests that revelation in creation has some amount of saving knowledge of God in it.

First of all, for Calvin, the *original purpose* of the revelation in creation is man's eternal life and perfect felicity. As Dowey puts it, "God's revelation (in creation) is always for the purpose of man's salvation"³⁰⁴ Calvin reflects this view in many places:

God has ordained all things to our profit and *salvation*.³⁰⁵

The natural order certainly was that the fabric of the world should be a school in which we might learn piety and by that means pass to *eternal life and perfect felicity*.³⁰⁶

Knowledge of this sort (coming from contemplation of God in his works), then, should not only arouse us to the worship of God but also us awaken and encourage us to *the hope of eternal life*.³⁰⁷

²⁹⁹ This is Calvin's terms in *Inst.* I.ii.1.

³⁰⁰ *Comm. on John* 1:5

³⁰¹ *CR* 49. 24; 49. 326; 48. 327. [Italics mine]

³⁰² *Inst.* II.vi.1.

³⁰³ *Inst.* I.v.15.

³⁰⁴ Dowey, *The Knowledge of God in Calvin's Theology*, 82.

³⁰⁵ *Inst.* I.xiv.22 [Italics mine]

³⁰⁶ *Inst.* II.iv.1. [Italics mine]

³⁰⁷ *Inst.* I.v.10. [Italics mine]

Second, for Calvin, the knowledge from the self-disclosure of God in nature includes pure and true religion, faith joined with an earnest fear of God,³⁰⁸ and enables us to “love and revere God as Father, and worship and adore him as Lord.”³⁰⁹ Here we notice that Calvin connects the knowledge from the self-disclosure of God in nature with our serving God as Lord and Father. According to Zachman, in Calvin’s doctrine of God, “the true knowledge of God must be knowledge of God as Lord and Father”, and “To know God as Father is to be assured that God is the fountain of every good, while to know God as Lord is to know that God gives us all good things in order that we might be conformed and united to God by holiness and righteousness of life.”³¹⁰ We can infer that if we serve God as our Father and Lord, it follows that he will save his children. It means that the words of “Father and Lord”, already include God the Creator and the Redeemer. In our Father and Lord, we cannot separate the Creator from the Redeemer. It is most probable that the knowledge of God of Creator and Redeemer will entail the saving knowledge.

Third, Calvin believes that the rays of Christ are diffused throughout the whole creation. The faint twilight of Gospel permeates creation. In the beginning, even before Christ, people are just allowed to walk in the “twilight of morning”:³¹¹ “...for the fathers, in the beginning, were required to walk in the twilight of morning; and the Lord manifested himself to them, by degrees, until, at length, Christ the Sun of Righteousness arose, in whom perfect brightness shines forth.”³¹² This suggests the continuity between nature and Christ. This continuity is more clearly suggested in the role of Christ as the mediator between God and human beings from the moment of creation. For Calvin, Christ is the mediator of all revelation and all means of knowing God. This means that Christ’s role as a mediator jumps over all time limitation, over the duration of his Incarnation when he was

³⁰⁸ Ibid.

³⁰⁹ Ibid.

³¹⁰ Zachman, *The Assurance of Faith*, 92-93.

³¹¹ *Comm. on Gen. 32:29*.

in the flesh. When Calvin says, “Never did God reveal Himself outside of Christ”,³¹³ or “Nor indeed, had any of the saints ever any communication with God except through the promised mediator”,³¹⁴ Calvin assures us of the mediatorship of *logos asarkos* as the “Eternal Word” jumping over but reflecting *logos ensarkos* as the *Deus manifestatus in carne*.³¹⁵ Adam was provided with the symbols of the tree of life and the tree of knowledge, even before the fall.³¹⁶ He had needed the Word so that he might be able to recognize God as Creator. Adam would have required Christ even if Adam had not fallen: “Even if man had remained free from all stain, his condition would have been too lowly for him to reach God without Mediator.”³¹⁷ Calvin says that before Christ was manifested, the ancients knew God through the eternal Word.³¹⁸ “The only-begotten Son, who today is for us “the splendor of the glory of God the father and the very stamp of his nature” [Heb. 1:3], became known of old to the Jew.”³¹⁹ The felicity and well-being of the Church, even the Old Testament Church, was always founded on the person of Christ.³²⁰ The Fathers of the old covenant both had and knew Christ through whom they were joined to God and made sharers of his promise.³²¹ God never otherwise revealed Himself to the Fathers “but in His eternal Word and only begotten Son”.³²² The light of salvation pervades all the world from creation through Christ as the eternal Son and the eternal mediator.

³¹² Ibid.

³¹³ *Comm. on John*. 5:23.

³¹⁴ *Comm. on Exod.* 3:2.

³¹⁵ Cf. E. David Willis, “The So-called Extra Calvinisticum and Calvin’s Doctrine of the Knowledge of God”, in *Calvin’s Catholic Christology* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1966), 101-131. Willis explains the relation between the *logos ensarkos* and the *logos asarkos* as “There is one eternal Logos who is *ensarkos* as *Deus manifestatus in carne* and is *asarkos* only in the sense that after the Incarnation the Word joined to the flesh, not restricted to it but not separated from it.” 109.

³¹⁶ Torrance, *Calvin’s Doctrine of Man*, 40.

³¹⁷ *Inst.* II.xii.1.

³¹⁸ *Inst.*, I.xiii.7.

³¹⁹ *Inst.* II.ix.1.

³²⁰ *Inst.* II.vi.2.

³²¹ *Inst.* II.x.2.

³²² *Comm. on Isa* 6:1.

[The Son] was always the Head of the Church and held primacy even over the angel and was the first of all creatures. Whence we conclude that he began to perform the office of Mediator not only after the fall of Adam but *insofar as he is the Eternal Son of God*, angels as well as men were joined to God in order that they might remain upright.³²³

More evidently, our argument as to the saving knowledge infused in nature in God's original intention gets a great support from Calvin's decisive statement that "man in his first condition excelled in these pre-eminent endowments, so that his reason, understanding, prudence, and judgement not only sufficed for the direction of his earthly life, but by them men *mounted up even to God and eternal bliss*."³²⁴

If we put all these together, we conclude that, for Calvin, the original purpose of nature is eternal life through Christ, the eternal Son and mediator, and that the primal simple knowledge we would get if Adam had not fallen would be "saving". Willis clearly states the presence of the saving knowledge in nature in the hypothetical situation of "If Adam had not fallen":

Because of the Fall, knowledge of God from nature apart from the aid of Scripture is not saving; he knew God from the ordering of the world. Even in his original state as created, man knew God from the ordering of the world. Even in his original state as created, man knew God only through the sustaining agent of the world, the Mediator with his Spirit. *Had man continued in this original knowledge of God, it would also have been saving, although Adam's knowledge of God was not complete and although he would have grown in it.*³²⁵

Compared to Calvin, Luther is more negative concerning the possibility of the presence of a saving knowledge in nature. He mitigates the possibility of Adam gaining

³²³ CO 9:338 (*Responsum ad Fratres Polonos*), quoted in Willis, *Calvin's Catholic Christology*, 70.

³²⁴ *Inst.* I.xv.8. [Italics mine]

³²⁵ Willis, *Calvin's Catholic Christology*, 128. [Italics mine]

some *saving* knowledge from nature. He confines all kinds of knowledge from nature (even the knowledge which the sinless Adam would have had) to the *general* knowledge, such as God's existence and attributes which will lead people to love and praise God. Therefore, "if only Adam had not sinned, men would have recognized God in all creatures, would have loved and praised Him." However, this knowledge, for Luther, is clearly distinguished from true knowledge containing saving knowledge. Luther's parable of the castle and its lord strongly suggests that in getting to the true knowledge of God, just the conditional "If Adam had not fallen" is not enough.

"The invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen...even His eternal power and Godhead" (Rom. 1:20). However, this is the knowledge of *posteriori*, which looks at God from without, seeing him in his works and government, just as we look at the exterior of a castle or house and from this form an opinion about the character of the lord or householder... Outwardly I may, of course, see what you are doing; but I cannot see your intentions and thoughts. On the other hand, you cannot know what I am thinking unless, by word or sign, I enable you to understand it... Much less can we see and know what God is in His own secret Essence until the Holy...reveals it to us.³²⁶

In the above passage, we notice Luther's statement that knowledge through nature is just like judging someone from looking at the person's outward form. This knowledge illuminates God's existence and attributes. Using Luther's term, this is *general knowledge*, not *particular knowledge*. This is *knowing about God*, not *knowing God*. This knowledge cannot entail God's revelation in the Cross and suffering of Christ and therefore be related to the saving knowledge of God. We can surmise that Luther is more negative of the possibility of natural theology or the presence of the saving knowledge in nature even in the hypothetical premise. Luther is convinced that the true knowledge of God comes only when the Holy Spirit reveals it. Even in the hypothetical situation of "if Adam had not

³²⁶ WA 21, 509. (*Am Sontag Trinitatis Epistel Röm 11:33-36*).

fallen”, we can peep into Luther’s pessimism toward natural theology, through his idea that masks have “different degrees of revelation”. Luther understands that all masks are not equal in revealing God. Though all masks reveal God, they are not the same in the degree or contents of the revelation of God. He reports that, in his age, some fanatics asked, “If Christ’s body is everywhere, ah, then I shall eat and drink him in all taverns, from all kinds of bowls, glasses, and tankards! Then there is no difference between my table and Lord’s table.”³²⁷ Luther condemns this kind of idea as “blasphemy”, and distinguishes between God’s being present and our touching him.³²⁸ This is true of Christ. For Luther, that he is everywhere is one thing, and that he permits himself to be caught and grasped is another. We should distinguish between two statements: God is present vs. God is present *for us*. Luther clearly distinguishes between the different qualities of masks. Revelation through such a mask as creation just shows a restricted aspect of the knowledge of God, such as his presence and attributes. It is difficult to decipher the will or heart of God through these masks. Even the eye of faith falls into a quandary when it tries to decipher the mask of creation to draw conclusions about who God is and what God is like. It is only the eye of God and the eye of the Holy Spirit which can grasp the true knowledge of God through stone, tree, and glasses. God does not want us to find him everywhere. What matters is whether God intends to be present *for us* so that we can find him. Therefore, Luther explains: “For although He is everywhere, in all creatures, and although I could find Him in a stone, in fire, in water, or even in a rope (For He surely is there), still He does not want me to look for Him apart from the Word...Search for Him where the Word is. There you will surely find Him. Otherwise you only tempt God and establish idolatry.”³²⁹ The Cross is the desired destination of this research. The Cross is where God reveals himself, for God

³²⁷ LW 37.66. (This is My Body)

³²⁸ LW 37.68. (This is My Body)

³²⁹ WA 19.492.19. (*Sermon von dem Sakrament*, 1526).

wants to and must be known in his suffering and death. We can get true knowledge of God only through undergoing the torment of the Cross, death, and hell.³³⁰ Therefore, it is more reasonable for us to conclude that Luther's God did not scatter the saving knowledge in nature as Calvin's God did. The knowledge which God allowed Adam to get from nature at the outset in his original intention is just concerning God's presence and attributes, not a saving knowledge of what God did for our salvation. Luther distinguishes the quality and content of revelation according to masks. It is only special revelation of God through the Holy Spirit which can speak of God's plan to save us and lead us to the true knowledge of God.

Both Luther and Calvin are emphatic that the climax of revelation of the hidden God is the Cross. Luther understands that true revelation is to be recognized in the sufferings and the Cross of Christ. Any attempt to seek God elsewhere than in the Cross of Christ is to be rejected out of hand as idle speculation. Luther's God is the God who reveals himself in the Cross of Christ, God hidden in suffering. His revelation retains a veiling, for his entire Divine Majesty lies hidden under the suffering and shame of the crucifixion. Knowledge of God comes through the indirect and hidden way of the Cross. The experience of torment of the Cross, death, and hell provides us with true theology and knowledge of God come about so that we may be a "theologian of the Cross".³³¹ True theology and knowledge of God are found in Christ crucified. The Cross shatters human illusions concerning the capacity of human reason to discern God.³³² Calvin expresses a similar view. Above all, he regards the Cross as the climax of the activity of the hidden God for our salvation. The Cross is where we find the prominent contrasts between the mask or veil and the reality in it: mortal and immortal God, death and life, righteousness and sin, and the source of

³³⁰ WA 5.176.31-32: "*verum nescio, an seipsos intelligant, si id actibus elicitis tribuunt, et non potius crucis, mortis infernique passionibus significari credunt.*"

³³¹ McGrath, *Luther's Theology of the Cross*, 151.

³³² LW 31.53. (Heidelberg Disputation)

blessing and curse. Like Luther, Calvin thinks that treasures are hidden under the contemptible abasement and simplicity of the Cross.³³³

As to how God exists in his modes of accommodation or mask, Luther and Calvin agree that God is not only immanent but also transcendent. Luther's God "may and can be circumscribed nowhere and in no being, so that he actually embraces all things and is in all, but no one being circumscribes him and is in him."³³⁴ "God is a supernatural inscrutable Being who resides simultaneously and entirely in every kernel of grain and still is in all and above all and outside all creatures."³³⁵ This clearly shows God's immanence and transcendence. For Calvin, when God accommodates himself, he is never incarcerated or confined. "Although the infinite essence of the Word is united in one person with the nature of man, yet we have no idea of its incarceration or confinement."³³⁶ As a testimony to this transcendence Calvin believes that though the Son of God was incarnated in the virgin's womb, to live upon the earth, and hang upon the Cross, yet he never abandoned the heaven. He always filled the world from the beginning.³³⁷ This testifies to God's transcendence. God cannot be locked up within any sign intended as the mode of accommodation.

For both Luther and Calvin, God does not lose his divinity in hiding or accommodation. For Luther, God is actively present in all creation and completely enters into it, yet God's Divine nature is not consumed in the reality of the world. Luther's God does not lose his divinity in hiding himself in the masks. This is well depicted in his parable of perfect images kept in the broken pieces of a mirror.³³⁸ The Christ in a myriad of masks keeps his perfect Divinity. In Calvin, accommodation does not weaken or detract

³³³ *Comm. on Col. 2:3.*

³³⁴ *LW 37.60. (This is My Body)*

³³⁵ *WA 26.339.34. (Vom Abendmahl Christi Bekenntnis, 1528)*

³³⁶ *Inst. II.xiii.4.*

³³⁷ *Ibid.*

³³⁸ *LW 37.266. (Confession concerning Christ's Supper)*

from God's glory or majesty. Divinity is completely preserved by "not lessening, but concealing". The Incarnation is the paradigm for this. While God was incarnated and thus Christ emptied himself, "he continued to retain his Divinity entire though it was a concealed under the veil of his flesh."³³⁹ His heavenly attributes and functions were not impaired at all. "The majesty of God was not annihilated, though it was surrounded by flesh; it was indeed concealed under the low condition of the flesh, but also so as to cause its splendor to be seen."³⁴⁰

However, Luther and Calvin show some dissension on the matter of how the body of Christ is in the bread as Christ's mask and Christ's accommodating form. Luther's idea clearly differs from Catholic transubstantiation. According to Catholic transubstantiation, a conversion of the bread into the body comes to pass, not because the body is properly made from the bread, but because Christ, to hide himself under the figure, annihilates its substance.³⁴¹ Luther objects to the idea of "a conversion of bread into the body", yet he shares the idea that Christ's body lies hidden under the form of bread on the ground of ubiquity of Christ's body. However, Calvin objects to both ideas. First, Calvin does not fasten Christ to the element of bread, nor enclose him in bread, nor circumscribe him in any way.³⁴² Second, Christ's body is in heaven, while his spirit is all over the world because of its Divine attribute of ubiquity. Calvin finds clear testimony for this from the Bible. After Christ's resurrection, the angels said, "He is not here", "He is risen." Calvin was sure that clear testimonies of Scripture showed that Christ's body was circumscribed by the measure of a human body.³⁴³ Calvin was very critical of Lutherans who attributed a Divine quality, ubiquity, to Christ's human body. He asks us not to try to think of Christ hidden under the cover of bread, but to seek Christ in the glory of his Kingdom with lifted

³³⁹ *Comm. on Matt.* 17:9.

³⁴⁰ *Comm. on John* 1:14.

³⁴¹ Cf. Ockham, *The Sacrament of the Altar*, Chapter V.

³⁴² *Inst.* IV.xvii.19.

eyes and minds.

But if we are lifted up to heaven with our eyes and minds, to seek Christ there in the glory of his Kingdom, as the symbols invite us to him in his wholeness, so under the symbol of bread we shall be fed by his body, under the symbol of wine we shall separately drink his blood, to enjoy him at last in his wholeness.³⁴⁴

Here it raises a more difficult problem: if Christ's body is in heaven not in bread, how can we eat his body by eating the bread and drink his blood by drink wine, in other words, how could the body and blood of Christ be shown to us in Sacrament? In Calvin's answer to Westphal, he refers to the "mystery surpassing human search that Christ in heaven feeds us with his flesh on earth."³⁴⁵ Calvin directly relates the unity between the body of Christ in heaven and the bread to the mysterious work of the Holy Spirit.

For though he has taken his flesh away from us, and in the body has ascended into heaven, yet he sits at the right hand of the Father—that is, he reigns in the Father's power and majesty and glory. *This Kingdom is neither bounded by location in space nor circumscribed by any limits.* Thus Christ is not prevented from exerting his power wherever he pleases, in heaven and on earth. He shows his presence in power and strength, is always among his own people, and breathes his life upon them, and lives in them, sustaining them, strengthening, quickening, keeping them unharmed, *as if he were present in the body.* In short, he feeds his people with his own body, the communion of which he bestows upon them *by the power of his Spirit.* In this manner, the body and blood of Christ are shown to us in the Sacrament.³⁴⁶

Here three phrases attract our eyes. The first is "*This Kingdom is neither bounded by location in space nor circumscribed by any limits.*" Calvin rides the body of Christ bounded and restricted in space on the vehicle of Kingdom of God unbounded and unlimited.

³⁴³ *Inst.* IV.xvii.29.

³⁴⁴ *Inst.* IV.xvii.18.

³⁴⁵ CR 9.81. = Calvin *Tracts* II. 291. [Italics mine]

Logically speaking, if Christ rides on this vehicle, we can conjecture that the body of Christ will be everywhere, permeating the entire universe under the aid of its own attributes of being “*neither bounded by location in space nor circumscribed by any limits.*” However, at this point, Calvin hesitates to proceed into this way too far and thus confirm “omnipresence of Christ’s body”. We can see this hesitation in his second italicized phrase of some ambiguous subjunctive mood, “*as if he were present in the body*”, which, conversely speaking, means that “he is not in the body.” Here Calvin suddenly turns his logic from “omnipresence of Christ’s body” into “omnipresence of his power”. According to it, Christ’s power lives in us without his body. Christ’s power works as if he were present in the body. This power is the secret to feed his own body in spite of such great distance between the Christ in heaven and bread. Then what is the identification of Christ’s power? It is more clearly suggested by the third italicized phrase, “*by the power of his Spirit*”. This Holy Spirit is the original power to bestow the communion of his body in heaven on people. Calvin describes this power of the Holy Spirit to make Christ’s body far away from us our food as “the secret power of the Holy Spirit”, which “towers above all our senses.” The block of distance and separation in the mystery of the Sacramental participation in Christ’s body is overcome through this secret power of the Holy Spirit to “unite things separated in space.”³⁴⁷

Finally, Luther does not monopolize his trademark of “hiddenness under the contraries”. Calvin, to some extent, shares it. Though it is not as dominant in Calvin as in Luther, we cannot but admit that it is a sure and substantial aspect of Calvin’s God. In Calvin, God hides himself under the contraries (*abscondita sub contrariis*), which is the characteristic of the veil which God wears for accommodation. In commenting on Isaiah 45:15, “Thou art a God that hides thyself”, Calvin believes that God hides himself in the

³⁴⁶ *Inst.* IV.xvii.18.

³⁴⁷ *Inst.* IV.xvii.10.

Incarnation. The glorious God is hidden under the abasement of flesh.³⁴⁸ God's divinity is concealed under a veil of flesh.³⁴⁹ This paradoxical way stuns human reason because his glory lies hidden under the humble form of flesh. "The abasement of the flesh was like a veil by which his Divine Majesty was concealed."³⁵⁰ In his *Commentary on Isaiah 52*, these shocking contrasts are well delineated. .

He says that Christ will be such that all men will be shocked at Him. He came into the world so as to be everywhere despised; His glory lay hid under the humble form of the flesh; for though a majesty of the only begotten Son of God shone forth in Him, yet the greater part of men did not see it, but, on the contrary, they despised that deep abasement which was the veil or covering of His glory.³⁵¹

Besides the idea of "hiddenness under the contraries", Calvin shares Luther's idea that that God works a strange work (*opus alienum*), in order that he may work his own work (*opus suum*). When God complains that "you have taken away my gold and silver...my desirable goods" (Joel 3:7), Calvin comments that we should not conceive of God as a child who takes delight in gold and silver and such shiny trinket, but rather the Lord speaks after a human manner, putting himself on in "*an alien mask or a character not his own (alienam personam)*".³⁵² In his *Commentary on Psalms 78:65*, too, Calvin speaks of God's alien mask: "Had they been of a pure and refined understanding, God would not have thus transformed himself or assumed a mask (*personam*) alien to him."³⁵³ The typical aspect of God's alien work for God's proper work is represented in his *Commentary on I Cor. 1:21*:

³⁴⁸ *Comm. on Phil. 2:7.*

³⁴⁹ *Inst. II.xiii.2.*

³⁵⁰ *Comm. on Phil. 2:7.*

³⁵¹ *Comm. on Isa. 52:14.*

³⁵² *Comm. on Joel 3:4-6.*

³⁵³ *Comm. on Ps. 78:65.*

Nothing is more absurd in the view of human reason than to hear that God has become mortal—that life has been subjected to death—that righteousness has been veiled under the appearance of sin—that the source of blessing has been subject to the curse, that by this means men might be redeemed from death, and become partakers of a blessed immortality—that they might obtain life—that sin being destroyed, righteousness might reign—and that death and the curse might be swallowed ³⁵⁴

In brief, Luther's God in Hiddenness I is characterized as God in the mask, while Calvin's God in Hiddenness I is God in accommodation. While Luther's doctrine of the hidden God is based on his theology of the Cross, Calvin's hidden God is based on the idea of accommodation. Luther's mask and Calvin's accommodation are very closely related as the relation of "means and end". Luther's mask is not a simple mask just for hiding. It not only hides, but also reveals like a mirror, and distinguishes between the perception of faith and that of faith like a filter. The mask's function as a filter naturally gives it a role as the instrument of God's judgement. God allows his masks to be God's created agents to achieve God's work. Like Luther's mask, Calvin's accommodation has diverse functions. The major function of the modes of Calvin's accommodation is adjusting God's reality to human capacity, performed by special functions of modes of accommodation characterized by veiling and unveiling, refracting and obscuring, transformation, and the pedagogical function of a bridle. These diverse functions make the meaning of hiddenness richer and deeper. Luther's and Calvin's God is paradoxical in the sense that he hides to reveal himself and works under the contraries for his proper work. Their God is not only immanent but also transcends his mask or modes of accommodation. Both understand that nature makes humanity inexcusable, because in nature, God's glory, wisdom, and power are fully revealed. They agree that true knowledge contains a saving knowledge. However, on the hypothetical premise of "Had Adam not been fallen," they diverge at the issue of

³⁵⁴ *Comm. on I Cor.* 1:20.

whether saving knowledge is scattered in nature. However, they reach the same conclusion that our corrupted perception cannot get to true knowledge of God. Both agree that natural reason cannot lead humanity to Christ. They share the view that the Bible is the only source from which we can get the true knowledge of God. For both, the climactic event in God's act of revealing and hiding himself took place on the Cross, where the contrast between God's revelation and hiddenness became extremely deeper, since, the veil or the mask formed by the humanity of Christ is so thick that the eye of reason just finds the wretched sinner on the Cross, while the eye of faith finds the utmost love, wisdom and power of God revealed on the Cross.

Luther and Calvin do not stop at Hiddenness I. Beyond revelation and accommodation, they confront a deeper hidden presence trembling and shuddering, which is characterized as "naked", "absolute", "abyss", "mysterious", and sometimes "frightening", "horrible", and "consuming fire". For Luther and Calvin, this hidden God behind revelation is not a fake fantasy, or puerile imagination, but a dreadful and stunning reality. He is none other than the God of Hiddenness II, as a substantial counterpart of Hiddenness I. It is a deeper paradox that he needs to be believed as one and the same God in spite of what might seem to be an utterly different aspect: a God of wrath and terror rather than a God of love and grace, as if he were "an arbitrary tyrant and enemy of human freedom."³⁵⁵ This Hiddenness II is the very place where the awesome secret of the Divine Majesty surrounding the problem of predestination resides, where even faith cannot find the way out but just wait for the light of glory, and where whoever lingers too long, trying to penetrate the mystery of the hidden will, only gets lost in the abyss of the hidden God.

³⁵⁵ Daniel L. Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1991), 75.

Part B. Hiddenness II in Luther and Calvin

Introduction

We have already defined how different Hiddenness I is from Hiddenness II. In Part B, we are going to discuss the latter in Luther and Calvin's thought. The aim of Part B is to investigate the characteristics of Hiddenness II in Luther and Calvin and compare them. In a large frame, this part, along with Part A, aims at providing an understanding and materials for the discussion in Part C of the relation between God hidden and revealed in Luther and Calvin, which is the climax of this thesis. Part B has two chapters. The first chapter is about Hiddenness II in Luther, and the second chapter about Hiddenness II in Calvin. Finally, in the conclusion to Part B, we are going to compare both of them.

Unlike Hiddenness I, Gerrish defines Luther's Hiddenness II as God's hiding *behind* revelation.¹ For Calvin it can be understood as the God beyond his accommodation. The mystery of deity is not dissipated, but what we do see is a visible piece of the mystery. Like Moses, we are permitted to catch a glimpse of God's back part. According to Luther and Calvin, knowledge of Hiddenness II recoils on God's hidden will. Hiddenness II is related to certain aspects of God's mysterious, inscrutable, dreadful, and awful being whose intentions remain concealed from us. John Dillenberger comments that in the depth of God which lies behind revelation, special problems arise, including the wrath of God, election, and predestination.² In a serious tone, Brunner, based on the history of the doctrine of predestination, warns us that "with the question of the Divine Decree we have entered the danger-zone, in which faith may suffer severe injury, and theological thinking may easily

¹ Gerrish, "To the Unknown God: Luther and Calvin on the Hiddenness of God", 134.

² Dillenberger, *God Hidden and Revealed*, xvi.

stray into disastrous error.”³ B. A. Gerrish comments that the concept of Hiddenness II has been found to be something of an embarrassment to scholars. He points to three reasons why the concept is less welcome in a concise and proper way: (1) this is another line of thought, which seems to defy harmonization with Hiddenness I; (2) it implies knowledge of God outside of Christ; (3) and it converges upon the problematic doctrine of double predestination.⁴

As Brunner remarks, now we are going to enter “the danger-zone”, where a glimmering mist of eternal mysteries which God of bottomless abyss keeps to himself pervades, evoking the feeling of terror and horror. However, by way of introduction, it is enough to say that Luther and Calvin have no intention to belittle this kind of hiddenness, nor to continue to paint it with just sombre colors. Rather, what Gerrish calls Hiddenness II takes on the sure proper Divine characteristic that lets God be God. This hidden God in an abyss of sightless darkness leads Luther and Calvin to extol not only the freedom of God but also the greatness of God who cannot be limited to human reason or understanding.

We find diverse understandings of the characterization of the God beyond revelation. Some scholars argue whether the God behind revelation is “arbitrary and capricious” and “beyond law (*ex lex*) or standard”, who is no more as trustworthy as the God revealed in Christ.⁵ Albrecht Ritschl thinks that Luther’s hidden God beyond revelation as an arbitrary God, and that his ways are different from the standard of man, unsearchable and unfathomable; God is and acts beyond law (*ex lex*) and standard.⁶ Reinhold Seeberg maintains a gap between the Creator and the creature,⁷ and is even willing to use the term “irrationality” to describe God’s relation to the world, not in the antirational sense, but in

³ Brunner, *Dogmatics*, vol. I, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 303.

⁴ Gerrish, “To the unknown God: Luther and Calvin on the Hiddenness of God”, 135.

⁵ This issue will be more deeply treated in Part C “The Relation between God Hidden and revealed in Luther and Calvin”.

⁶ Albrecht Ritschl, *Geschichtliche Studien zur Christlichen Lehre von Gott in Gesammelte Aufsätze*, 80-85.

⁷ Reinhold Seeberg, *Christliche Dogmatik*, vol. I (Erlangen, Leipzig: Deichert, 1925), 94.

the suprarational sense.⁸ He characterizes the *Deus absconditus* as “the abysmal ground of possibility behind the *ordinata*.”⁹ Elert asserts that the wrath of God in Luther is not to be identified with capricious activity on the part of God. He is eternal and unchangeable. He is not capricious, even though he appears so to people.¹⁰ Hirsch regards God as the free Lord over all things, as the One who binds all things together, but is himself not bound.¹¹ Brunner understands that Luther’s Hiddenness II refers to “the *Deus absolutus*, the God of wrath”.¹² Rudolf Otto thinks of Luther’s hidden God as “the wholly other” and “the *mysterium tremendum*: the awesome and the fascinating”.¹³ Paul Althaus characterizes “the hiddenness of God apart from Christ” contrasted with “the mystery of God in Christ.”¹⁴

Then how can we characterize Luther and Calvin’s hidden God behind revelation? How similar and how different are they? With this question in mind, in this Part, as in Part A, we shall look first at Hiddenness II in Luther and Calvin, before we compare their understanding and make use of this theme for our investigation of the relation of God hidden and revealed.

⁸ Ibid., 97.

⁹ Reinhold Seeberg, *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte*, vol. IV, pt.1. 156-9.

¹⁰ Werner, Elert, *Morphologie des Luthertums*, vol. 1 (München: Beck, 1965, c1931), 34.

¹¹ E. Hirsch, *Luthers Gottesanschauung*, 9.

¹² Brunner, *Dogmatics*, vol. I, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, (London: Lowe and Brydone, 1962), 172; 232.

¹³ See Otto’s *The Idea of the Holy*.

¹⁴ See Paul Althaus, *Die Letzen Dinge*, 31-35.

Chapter III. Hiddenness II in Luther: God beyond Revelation

Luther remarks, “Nobody doubts that there is a great deal hid in God in which we do not know.”¹⁵ In his tract against Erasmus, *The Bondage of the Will*, (1525), Luther speaks of the hiddenness of God apart from God revealed in Christ. Besides, in *Lectures on Genesis* (1539-44), Luther introduces this hidden God beyond revelation.¹⁶ This idea opens a new sphere to Luther’s understanding of the hidden God, which deepens and enriches his theological world. His tract against Erasmus does not deal primarily with the problem of the hidden God, but, as the title indicates, with the problem of free will and the enslaved will. In support of his argument on freewill, Erasmus cites Ezekiel 18:23, “Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked, says the Lord God, and not rather that he turn from his way and live?” According to Erasmus’s interpretation, it is not logical that God who has sorrow over the sinner’s death is the very one who causes the sinner’s death. Therefore, Erasmus’s sharp question follows: “Is it conceivable that the God who weeps over the death causes this very death?” On this point, Luther’s religious intuition leads him to his famous concept of the hidden God beyond revelation. He finds an answer in his doctrine of the hidden God beyond revelation of Christ. Luther distinguishes a preached, revealed, and worshipped God from the God who is not any of these. David Tracy understands that, in the case of history, Luther portrays “an apocalyptic, interruptive, non-continuous” understanding of history just as Pascal and Racine portray the hidden God present in all just historical struggles. According to Tracey’s characterization of this aspect of Hiddenness II, “this literally awful and ambivalent sense of God’s Hiddenness is so overwhelming that God is sometimes experienced as purely frightening, not tender:

¹⁵ LW 33.25. (*Bondage of the Will*)

¹⁶ LW 5.38ff. (Gen 26:8-9); 6.145-155. (Gen 32:32)

sometimes as an impersonal ‘It’ of sheer power and energy signified by such metaphors as even as abyss, chasm, chaos, even horror; sometimes even as a violent personal reality.”¹⁷ This God hidden beyond revelation is none other than the God with “awesome, frightening, numinous Divine power”.¹⁸

In this chapter which is parallel to Chapter I, I am going to investigate and spotlight Luther’s understanding of Hiddenness II from various angles. First and foremost, in Section 1, he is characterized as a naked and absolute God without any masks or veils, who appears in sharp contrast with God in the mask we have seen in Chapter I. In Section 2, he reflects some dynamic and powerful aspects of *potentia absoluta*. In Section 3, as the central image of Hiddenness II, he is described as a God of predestination who elects some and damns many with absolute sovereignty, without considering any good or merit in people. The hidden will is the Divine counterpart of the very human question of “Why some and not others?” In Section 4, in an inseparable relation with a God of predestination, he is emphasised as the God of freedom to determine what kind of people will be saved. In Section 5, to borrow Rudolf Otto’s words, he is none other than the *mysterium tremendum*: the awesome and the fascinating. These are the themes that structure the discussion which follows.

1. God as the “Naked and Absolute” God

In Luther, God behind a mask, “offers Himself to us as the God of wrath, death, and hell.”¹⁹ This God is none other than the naked God [*Deus nudus*]: God in himself, a strange, terrifying, and indeterminate presence. Luther uses the naked God interchangeably

¹⁷ Tracy, “The Hidden God: The Divine Other of Liberation”, 10.

¹⁸ Ibid., 12.

¹⁹ LW 8.31.

with the absolute God who indicates the God out of relation to the world.²⁰ This God looks terribly threatening to destroy people relentlessly, who fills us with dread and fear and makes us fall into despair. This aspect is the complete opposition to the revealed God of love and mercy.

From this absolute God everyone should flee who does not want to perish... Human weakness cannot help being crushed by such majesty... We must take hold of this God, not naked but clothed and revealed in His Word; otherwise despair crushes us... The absolute God is like an iron wall, against which we cannot bump without destroying ourselves. Therefore Satan is busy day and night, making us run to the naked God so that we forget His promises and blessings shown in Christ and think about God and the judgement of God. When this happens, we perish utterly and fall into despair.²¹

In his sermon on Exodus 20, Luther describes the “naked God” as completely different from the God revealed in Christ, the revealed God: a terrible, frightful, majestic, and destructive power who does not care for us.

Yea, he is more terrible and frightful than the devil. For he deals with us and brings us to ruin with power, smites and hammers us and pays no heed to us. In his majesty he is a consuming fire. For therefrom can no man refrain: if he thinks on God aright, his heart in his body is struck with terror... Yea, as soon as he hears God named, he is filled with trepidation and fear.²²

This naked God is the Divine Majesty whose glory will consume whoever investigates his Divine Majesty.²³ He is ready to destroy any human who attempts to uncover it: “Let Me be hidden where I have not revealed Myself to you”, says God, “or you will be the cause of your destruction, just as Adam fell in a horrible manner; for he who investigates My

²⁰ LW 12.312. (Ps 51:1)

²¹ LW 12.312. (Psalm 51:1)

²² Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of Holy* (London and Edinburgh: Oxford: University Press, 1925), 103. Here Otto quotes the Erlangen edition of Luther's works, 36.210ff., 222, 231, 237; 47.145; 50.200

majesty will be overwhelmed by My glory.”²⁴ Brunner, following Luther, explains in his *Dogmatics* that the *Deus nudus*, who does not veil himself in the form of the Son of Man, is the terrible Majesty, which is “intolerable to all creation”.²⁵ He is a mysterious, terrifying majesty. He drives us to the depths and the abyss of despair.²⁶ It is a mistake to leave the God Incarnate in order to follow the *Deus nudus* because then there is nothing left save the wrath of God. The sight of this naked God would inevitably annihilate us, as we would be burnt up if exposed to the unshaded rays of the sun.²⁷ This absolute God is our “bitterest of enemies” in his nature and majesty, who requires the fulfilling of the Law and in his majesty, accuses sins, and shatters the sinners with consuming fire.²⁸ Luther describes what his acquaintance experienced as the horrible terror in the presence of the wrathful hidden God is like in a most sharp and vivid way.

I knew a man [Luther wrote in 1518] who said that he had often suffered these pains in the shortest possible compass of time, so great and infernal that “no tongue nor pen can show” nor can those believe who have not experienced, so that if there were completed, or lasted half an hour, or even the tenth part of an hour, he would utterly perish, and his bones be reduced to ashes. Then God appears horrifyingly angry and with him, the whole creation. There can be no flight, no consolation, neither within nor without, but all is accusation.²⁹

2. God as a Remodelled *Potentia Absoluta*

Luther’s hidden God is deeply related to the distinction between *potentia absoluta* and *potentia ordinata*. The distinction between these two powers of God has its origins in early scholasticism, in Peter Damien and Anselm of Canterbury, and was used extensively in the

²³ LW 26.28-29. (Gal 1:3, 1535)

²⁴ LW 5:44 (Gen 26:9)

²⁵ Brunner, *Dogmatics*, vol. I, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 232.

²⁶ LW 33.190. (*Bondage of the Will*)

²⁷ WA 42.297ff.

²⁸ LW 12:312-314 (Psalm 51:1)

²⁹ WA 1.557.33. Cited in E. Gordon Rupp, *The Righteousness of God* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1953),

fourteenth century.³⁰ Although at the beginning of scholasticism these terms had been somewhat ancillary and subordinate, after Duns Scotus, they were treated as key terms in the nominalistic tradition for theological method, and for the understanding of an increasing number of dogmatic *loci*.³¹ According to St. Thomas Aquinas, while God is omnipotent, there are many things which he is perfectly able to do, but which he chooses not to do. From the initial possibility for Divine action, save what would involve contradiction, God selected a subset which he willed to actualize. The remaining subset of unwilled possibilities was set aside as only hypothetically possible.³² God's absolute power refers to the initial set of possibilities open to God, while his ordained power refers to the subset of possibilities which God determined to actualize.³³ Gabriel Biel emphasises that these two powers should not be understood as two different ways of Divine action such as alternating between ordinate and inordinate behavior. Oberman introduces Biel's definition of these terms which followed the pattern of Duns Scotus and Ockham:

But the distinction should be understood to mean that God can — and, in fact, has chosen to — do certain things according to the laws which he freely established, that is, *de potentia ordinata*. On the other hand, God can do everything that does not imply contradiction, whether God has decided to do these things [*de potentia ordinata*] or not, as there are many things God can do which he does not want to do. The latter is called God's power *de potentia absoluta*.³⁴

In Luther's works, it is not difficult to demonstrate that Luther was well acquainted with this distinction and absorbed its logic personally. Luther speaks of some questions related to this logic in the *Bondage of the Will*:

110.

³⁰ McGrath, *Luther's Theology of the Cross*, 54.

³¹ Oberman, *The Harvest of Medieval Theology*, 36.

³² *Summa Theologiae* 1a q.25 a.5c. See W. J. Courtenay, "Nominalism and Late Medieval Religion", 27 and McGrath, *Luther's Theology of the Cross*, 55.

³³ McGrath, *Luther's Theology of the Cross*, 55-56.

³⁴ Oberman, *The Harvest of Medieval Theology*, 36-7.

Why did God let Adam fall, and why did He create us all tainted with the same sin, when He might have kept Adam safe, and might have created us of other material, or of seed that had first been cleaned? God is He for Whose will no cause or ground may be laid down as its rule and standard; for nothing is on a level with it or above it, but it is itself the rule for all things.³⁵

In this quotation, we find clues which indicate Luther's knowledge of this distinction: the several hypothetical conditionals such as "when He might have kept Adam safe" or "might have created us of other material, or of seed that had first been cleaned?", some statements describing God's absolute power, such as "He for Whose will no cause or ground may be laid down as its rule and standard" or "it is itself the rule for all things." These expressions are exactly in accordance with the meaning of *potentia Dei absoluta*.

Reinhold Seeberg argued that Luther's hidden God is a direct result of his personal acceptance of the scholastic world view. He believes that Luther's distinction, between *potentia Dei absoluta* and *potentia Dei ordinata* is due to Scotist and Ockhamist doctrine.³⁶ Seeberg contends that Luther did not repudiate this distinction though he had no conviction that the term *ordinata* has any significance for religious expression. Seeberg points out that the *Deus absconditus* in Luther is "the abysmal ground of possibility behind the *ordinata*."³⁷ In a similar vein, Emil Brunner too suggests that in case of predestination Luther was under the influence of the late scholastic period, with its concept of *velle absoluta* (absolute will). This interpretation, consistent with the notion of double predestination, leaves the freedom of man out of account and emphasises the *Allwirksamkeit* of God.³⁸ Karl Holl would generally agree with Seeberg. However, he has some difference, in that he

³⁵ LW 33.180-181. (*Bondage of the Will*, slightly altered)

³⁶ Reinhold Seeberg, *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte*, vol. IV, 182.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 156-9.

³⁸ Cf. Dillenberger, *God Hidden and Revealed*, 109.

emphasises that Luther's idea of the hidden God belongs primarily to the original creative side of Luther. He understands that the idea, that God has no law over himself and that what he does is right because he does it, looks like Ockham's view, but means the exact opposite for Luther.³⁹ According to him, the Divine transcending of law does not cancel God's righteousness. Rather, that he is not bound by law speaks for the righteousness of God, and someday the righteousness of God will be clear.⁴⁰

How did Luther utilize this framework drawn from scholastic theology? The essence of what Luther wanted to extract from the traditional concept of the *potentia absoluta* in his scheme of the hidden God is the idea of "freedom", "potency", and "all in all". In terms of theological significance, the framework of God's absolute power protects God's freedom.⁴¹ In this frame, God is at liberty and he is not restricted to any act of necessity. God, inasmuch as he is omnipotent, has the ability to do many things that he does not will to do, has never done, nor ever will do. According to Franz Law, the Erfurt Ockhamists, who were the pupils of the last great Ockhamist, Gabriel Biel, have a picture of God with absolute omnipotence, freedom, and majesty. Their theology is a theology of the sovereignty of God.⁴² This God filled with mighty power, enjoying freedom beyond natural order, corresponds to Luther's hidden God beyond revelation. In the following passage in *The Bondage of the Will*, Luther draws the vivid picture of the hidden God in his freedom and all in all, not restricted within any act of necessity:

But God hidden in Majesty neither deplores nor takes away death, but works life, and death, and all in all; nor has He set bounds to Himself by His Word, but has kept Himself free over all things.⁴³

³⁹ Karl Holl, "Was Verstand Luther unter Religion?" in *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kirchengeschichte*, vol. I, 4.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 41.

⁴¹ McGrath, *Luther's Theology of the Cross*, 56.

⁴² Franz Law, *Luther* (London: SCM Press LTD, 1963), 41.

However, we should remember that Luther does not follow the traditional distinction literally. Luther at times criticizes the distinction between *potentia ordinata* and *potentia absoluta* enough to characterize it as “futile” or “empty words”.

...there has been such sweating and toiling to excuse the goodness of God and accuse of the will of man; and it is here the distinctions have been invented between the ordained and the absolute will of God, and between the necessity of consequence and consequent, and so forth, though *nothing has been achieved by them* except that the ignorant have been imposed upon by *empty talk* and “contradiction of what is falsely called knowledge.”⁴⁴

More exactly speaking, Luther recasts and reorients these ideas in his creative furnace. The point is that Luther changed the notion of the power of God from the area of potentiality into that of reality. Luther's concept of omnipotent will differs radically from that of the nominalists because for Luther the *potentia absoluta* does not indicate what God *could* have done—which belongs to the hypothetical potential—, but what he *actually did* in his complete hidden darkness. This point is clear when we see that, while explaining the foreknowledge and omnipotence of God in his *Bondage of the Will*, Luther defines “the omnipotence of God” in a new way: “By the omnipotence of God, however, I do not mean the potentiality by which he could do many things which he does not, but the active power by which he potently works all in all (Cf. 1Cor. 12:6).”⁴⁵ Here Luther transforms the characteristics of *potentia absoluta* (the potential to do many things which he does not do) from potentiality into “active power in freedom.” On the one hand, Luther spotlights the image “God of freedom who works all in all with potent power”, using the language of the traditional concept of the *potentia absoluta*. On the other hand, Luther gets rid of the idea of hypothetical potential in his large project of God hidden and revealed. This recasting

⁴³ LW 33.140. (*Bondage of the Will*)

⁴⁴ LW 33.190. (*Bondage of the Will*)

⁴⁵ Ibid.

makes Luther's framework of God hidden and revealed more convincing and powerful, because it overcomes the weak point the concepts of *potentia ordinata* and *absoluta* inherently had in their nature in that the hypothetical potential (the *potentia absoluta*) and the actualized (the *potentia ordinata*) speak of different areas which do not mix. The traditional concept of the *potentia absoluta* cannot fully explain the essential aspect of the hidden God who does not belong to the potential possibility, but works as a powerful reality with mighty power unrestricted by our reason, and even our faith. Luther's hidden God is the powerful God who decides to throw people into perdition without any discussion with his creatures, before they do anything right or wrong. This hidden and secret decision is not what God could have done, but what God did in reality. It is not a fantasy or some imaginable fiction, but a harsh fact accomplished by the God who works in all in all. Luther changed the relation of the reality (*potentia ordinata*) vs. potentiality (*potentia absoluta*) respectively orbiting in different spheres into the serious clash of reality (God revealed = *potentia ordinata*) vs. reality (God hidden = recast *potentia absoluta* = active power in freedom). In this way, Luther brought down the area of potentiality into the actual area of reality by tearing off the tag "potential".

3. God of Predestination

As Barth indicates, Luther's concept of predestination is well epitomized into his words in his work, *The Bondage of the Will*: God's hidden will "determines for itself which and what sort of men it chooses to enable to participate in this mercy offered through the proclamation."⁴⁶ For Luther, the mystery of the hidden God is closely linked to the riddle of Divine predestination. Predestination is at the core of God's Hiddenness II because

⁴⁶ Barth, *CD*, II/2, 14. Here Barth cites *WA*. 18.684.35 (*Bondage of the Will*).

Luther's idea of Hiddenness II flows from the mystery of predestination. Predestination led Luther to acknowledge the hidden God beyond revelation with the "concealed and dreadful will", which is "the most awesome secret of the Divine Majesty". The revealed God in Christ desires that all men should be saved, in that he comes to all by the word of salvation, and the fault is in the will of those who do not receive Him; as He says in Matt. 23:37: "How often would I have gathered thy children together, and thou wouldst not!" But here a serious question is raised. Why does not God remove or change this fault of will in every human when it is not in the power of humans to do it? Why does God lay this fault to the charge of the human will, when man cannot avoid it?⁴⁷ Luther answers that we do not know and warns that it is unlawful to ask. The ultimate answer of this question can be found only in the concealed and dreadful will of God. According to that hidden Divine counsel, the hidden God ordains such persons as he wills to receive and take share in mercy preached and offered. However, "this will is not to be enquired into, but reverently adored, as by far the most awesome-inspiring secret of the Divine Majesty, reserved for himself alone and forbidden to us..."⁴⁸ What is hidden is not the fact that God hardens many and chooses few, but *why* God does so.⁴⁹ He reserves to himself the freedom to determine who and how many people he will save. The hidden will is directly related to the human question of "Why some and not others?" Why do some come to have faith, and others fail? This matter is ultimately traced back to the predestinating God. But to pursue the question is to be guilty of the arrogant "Why?" as is shown in Romans 9:19.⁵⁰ It is forbidden to us. As the maxim says, "What is above is none of our business." Paradoxically, it is Luther himself who looks like the one who tries to delve into the hidden area of God.⁵¹ Erasmus spoke of the impenetrable mysteries of God, but according to Luther, he wrongly

⁴⁷ LW 33.140. (*Bondage of the Will*)

⁴⁸ LW 33.139. (*Bondage of the Will*)

⁴⁹ LW 33.58-64. (*Bondage of the Will*)

⁵⁰ LW 33.203-206. (*Bondage of the Will*)

⁵¹ LW 33.58-64; 206-212. (*Bondage of the Will*)

located them in scriptural revelation.⁵² Luther resorts to Hiddenness II in order to solve all mysterious puzzles of God. God wills many things that he does not disclose in his Word.⁵³ “God does not will the death of a sinner in his Word—but he does it by that inscrutable will.”⁵⁴ God revealed in his Word mourns the sinner’s death and seeks to save him from it. God hidden in his majesty, on the other hand, does not mourn the sinner’s death, or abrogate it, but works life and death in all in all. God does many things that he does not show us through his Word. God has not limited himself to his Word but retains his freedom over everything.

The ultimate matter which preoccupied Luther throughout his life is the sharp contrast between God’s love revealed in Christ and God’s wrath which throws sinners into eternal perdition. This contrast gives a greatest possible offence to common sense or natural reason in that “God by his own sheer will should abandon, harden, and damn men as if he enjoyed the sins and the vast, eternal torments of his wretched creatures, when he is preached as a God of such great mercy and goodness, etc.”⁵⁵ Furthermore, Luther confessed that this offense was a serious torment and cause of despair to himself, saying, “And who would not be offended? I myself was offended more than once, and brought to the very depth and abyss of despair, so that I wished I had never been created a man...”⁵⁶ How can the God who wants all to be saved decide to throw the sinners in the eternal perdition? How can a God of predestination blame the sinner who is supposed to follow the predestined way? This sounds like the unanswered cry that resounded throughout Luther’s life. Fundamentally Luther understands that this matter belongs to the mystery of God. Luther’s God of predestination does not allow any criticism. The most awe-inspiring

⁵² LW 33.26ff; 89ff. (*Bondage of the Will*): Erasmus calls the impenetrable mysteries of God “Corycian Cave”, an entrance to the underworld. According to him, there are secret places in Scripture into which God has not wished us to penetrate too deeply and if we try to do so, then the deeper we go, the darker it gets.

⁵³ LW 33.140. (*Bondage of the Will*)

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ LW 33.190. (*Bondage of the Will*)

⁵⁶ Ibid.

secret of the Divine Majesty is reserved for God alone and forbidden to us. Who are you, to answer back to God? We should be silent and adore the majesty of the Divine power and will.⁵⁷

4. God of Freedom

Luther proclaims that the hidden God is a God of freedom. Free will is a Divine attribute and is properly applied only to the Divine Majesty.⁵⁸ Luther describes the nature of freedom of the hidden God in several ways.

First, the hidden God is free over all things in the sense that *he is the absolute standard*. In *The Bondage of the Will*, Luther finds at this point a way out from the traditionally baffling question that we encountered earlier, “why did God let Adam fall, and why did he create us all tainted with the same sin, when he might have kept Adam safe, and might have created us of other material, or seed that had first been cleansed?”⁵⁹

Luther’s argument for this is as follows:

He is God, and for his will there is no cause or reason that can be laid down as its rule and standard; for nothing is on a level with it or above it, but it is itself the rule for all things. If any rule or standard, or cause or ground existed for it, it could no longer be the will of God. What God wills is not right because He ought, or was bound, so to will; on the contrary, what takes place must be right, because He so wills it. Causes and grounds are laid down for the will of the creature, but not for the will of the Creator—unless you set another Creator over him!⁶⁰

This speaks of God as the absolute standard. God is not like men in that he is under no law.

⁵⁷ LW 33.139-140. (*Bondage of the Will*)

⁵⁸ LW 33.64-70. (*Bondage of the Will*)

⁵⁹ See the above Chapter III.2. “God as a Remodelled *Potentia Absoluta*”.

⁶⁰ LW 33.181. (*Bondage of the Will*, slightly altered)

A God who was under the law would not be regarded as God since he would be subject to another authority: “Whoever does not know that God is subject to no law, let him be silent; in God there is nothing but will, will, will.”⁶¹ God himself is not only the highest authority but also the final court of appeal. He is “the rule for everything”. He himself is his own law.⁶² He wills and acts according to the norm of his holy nature. That is, God cannot be bound to human values, human reason and human judgement. God transcends these and enjoys his absolute freedom.

Second, the hidden God is free over all things in the sense that *he works all in all*. Luther finds the Biblical basis for this in 1 Cor. 12:6, “God works all in all.” Paul Althaus indicates that Luther expands the sense of this passage far beyond Paul’s meaning,⁶³ and finds that God is the ultimate cause of all. People tend to find the bright God in revelation represented by love, blessing, mercy, and life. But some passages in the Bible offer a glimpse of the hidden God who presides over not only all positive things but also what seems to be all the negative things from a human perspective: “I form light and create darkness, I make weal and create woe, I the Lord do all these things” (Isa 45:7, 15). Luther makes it clear that God works all in all by saying that “God hidden in Majesty neither deplores nor takes away death, but works life, and death, and all in all.”⁶⁴ Those who are used to seeing just the bright side of God will be stunned and silenced when they see tragic catastrophes in the world. For Luther, the hidden God is the answer to their question, “Where is God?” God works all in all. “He is a supernatural, inscrutable being who exists at the same time in every little seed, whole and entire, and yet also in all and outside all created things.”⁶⁵ He is creative, and, at the same time, destructive. Not only life but also death, not only blessing but also curse belongs to the awesome God who works in freedom.

⁶¹ WA 16.148. (*Predigten über das 2 Buch Mose*, 1541-21)

⁶² WA 56.396. (Die Scholien Rom 9:14)

⁶³ Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, 274.

⁶⁴ LW 33.140. (*Bondage of the Will*)

“He is present everywhere, even in death, in hell, among enemies, yes even their hearts. For he has made and rules everything so that it must do his will.”⁶⁶ Following Luther, Brunner explains, “this freedom of God to effect salvation and doom, light and darkness, life and death, is the unfathomable mystery of God, which even in the revelation of the Son remains mystery.”⁶⁷

Third, the hidden God is free in the sense that *he is not confined to his Word*. This is a theological puzzle. The revealed God laments the death of sinners, but the hidden God can will the death of sinners as the one who has not set bounds to Himself by His Word, but has kept Himself free over all things.⁶⁸ Luther argues that when we are dealing with the revealed God, we dare not forget about the hidden God. God has indeed revealed himself in his Word, but God is greater than his Word. God has not confined himself within the limits of the Word. Here what is most emphasised is God’s supreme attribute of freedom. We may not approach too closely to that freedom, even when we appeal to the Word. Luther’s God is not exhausted in his Word. Therefore, we must distinguish between “the Word of God and God himself”. The Word does not contain God Himself fully. In so far as God does not reveal himself in his Word, he remains hidden for us. His will is inscrutable. Sometime God himself beyond the Word is incomprehensible within the revelation of the Word. Sometimes, he looks to be the opposite of the God revealed in the Word. Thus he does not will the death of sinner, according to his Word; but he wills it according to that inscrutable will of his.

Last, but more fundamentally, Luther’s idea of the freedom of God is deeply related to his absolute freedom in predestination. Not all will be blessed. Many will be lost. This decision is not made by human free will, only by God’s absolute freedom of will. He

⁶⁵ LW 39.228. (Confession concerning Christ’s Supper)

⁶⁶ WA 19.219. (Jonah 2:1, 1526). Cf. LW 33.47. (*Bondage of the Will*)

⁶⁷ Brunner, *Dogmatics*, vol. I, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 232.

⁶⁸ LW 33.140. (*Bondage of the Will*)

chooses some to be saved and rejects the others, without regard for our act or condition. This is absolutely unconditional. God gives faith to some through the working of the Holy Spirit, but does not allow many to receive the grace of salvation—they must stay in their unbelief. Salvation and damnation thus stem from God's absolute freedom of will. Luther's proclamation of the absolute freedom of God's grace is intended to "humble our pride and lead us to God's grace"⁶⁹ and thus to "purify Christian faith from all secret claims and all self-security."⁷⁰

5. The *Mysterium Tremendum*: The Awesome and the Fascinating

In *The Idea of the Holy*, Rudolf Otto confesses that his understanding of the numinous stems from his early work on Luther, *Die Anschauung vom heiligen Geiste bei Luther*.⁷¹ Otto's thought can be characterized as a variation upon the theme of the wholly other. Otto understands that the feeling of the wholly other is the basic for primitive religions and the history of religions. Otto explains that from the dawn of human life, religion is deeply related to the *sensus numinus* [feeling of the presence of the Divine], an experience of the mysterious and an impulse toward the *mysterium*—an experience which breaks forth from the depth of the emotional life on the stimulus of outer attraction as the "sense of the wholly other".⁷² However, Otto attributes the discovery of the *mysterium tremendum* to Luther long before he finds it in the Old Testament and the history of religions. He elaborates the distinction which Luther makes in *The Bondage of the Will*: the distinction between God in himself, as he is in his nature, and God as he is revealed in his

⁶⁹ Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, 283.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 286.

⁷¹ Otto, *The Idea of Holy*, 103.

⁷² Otto, "The *Sensus Numinus*", in *Hibbert Journal* XXX (1931-32): 430.

mercy.⁷³ Otto wishes to point out the experience which a person has when confronted with the majesty of God. In a sense, “hiddenness” is the terribleness of God as one stands before his majesty. In fact, Otto suggests that a person cannot really see God’s majesty, or sense the fear it inspires, unless God’s majesty already touches him. It is because of this that Otto argues humans cannot sufficiently fear God, though the fear of God played such a large part in Luther.⁷⁴

The decisive element in Otto’s idea of the majesty of God does not lie in moral conceptions one might apply to majesty, such as righteousness or goodness. It is the fact of majesty itself before which one fears and shudders. It is the nonrational which borders on irrationality. In particular, in Luther’s Job, when Otto thinks of the nonrational side of God, he emphasises “the irrational with sheer paradox baffling comprehension”. This emphasis leads Otto more concerned on Luther’s violent onslaughts on the ‘whore Reason.’ Otto understands that for Luther reason “must seem grotesque to any one who has not rightly grasped the problem of the non-rational element in the idea of God.”⁷⁵ For this, Otto resorts to Luther’s passage:

For were his [God’s] justice such as could be adjudged as just by the human understanding it were manifestly not Divine, and would differ in nothing from human justice. But since God is true and single, yea in his entire incomprehensible and inaccessible to human reason, it is right, nay it follows necessarily, that his justice also is incomprehensible.⁷⁶

Although Otto does not use the term, one could say that Otto refers to Luther’s *Deus nudus*. It is confronting God as he is, without predicates. Luther’s hidden God as the *Deus nudus* is united with the feeling of terror. Therefore, if anyone stands before him, he trembles

⁷³ Otto, *The Idea of Holy*, 24, 101.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 15.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 104.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 105. Cf. *WA* 18.784. = *LW* 33.290. (*Bondage of the Will*)

because he is the transgressor of the law. Before the holy God, the sinner trembles with numinous horror. Otto quotes Luther's several passages from his sermons on Exodus 20 which illustrate the numinous horror in its aspect of "*maiestas*" and "*tremendum*".

God assails a man and has such a delight therein that he is of his jealousy and wrath impelled to consume the wicked. ⁷⁷

Then shall we learn how that God is a consuming fire... the consuming, devouring fire? Will thou sin? Then will He devour thee up? For God is a fire, that consumes, devours, rages; verily He is your undoing, as fire consumes a house and makes it dust and ashes.⁷⁸

We naturally tremble when our "uncovered" creaturehood stands before God who is in the awful majesty of His very Godhead with the awe-inspiring, nonrational character of deity—the God in himself as he is in essence. Otto asserts that whoever stands before the awesome majesty trembles not simply because he is the transgressor of the law, but the creature, as such, in his "uncovered" creaturehood. Otto relates this to Luther: "Luther even ventures to designate this awe-inspiring, nonrational character of deity as *Deus ipse, ut est in sua natura et maiestate* [God in himself as he is in his essence and majesty]."⁷⁹ Harnack, too, indicates that Luther believes that the hidden God is identified with the dread of the natural man before God.⁸⁰ To express the feeling of the creature who stands before the awesome God, Otto invents the term 'creaturely feeling'. As a suitable example to clarify it, Otto cites Abraham's words when Abraham dares to plead with God for the men of Sodom, "Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes." Creaturely feeling is the "note of self-abasement into nothingness before an overpowering, absolute might of some kind."⁸¹ Otto suggests that those who experience

⁷⁷ Ibid., 102.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Adolf Harnack, *History of Dogma*, vol. VII, 203.

⁸¹ Otto, *The Idea of Holy*, 10.

the numinous experience a sense of dependency on something objective and external to themselves that is greater than themselves.

This creaturely feeling leads to a sense of the ‘numinous’, a term which Otto coins to describe the nonrational factor in the word of “holy”, minus the moral and rational aspects.⁸² It is the ineffable core of religion. All the terms he uses are but an attempt to clarify the nature of the nonrational factor. The numinous manifests itself as a particular type of feeling. Otto pins down the experience of numinous in terms of a Latin phrase, *mysterium tremendum*. He presents the *tremendum* component of the numinous as comprising three elements: awfulness (inspiring awe, a sort of profound unease), overpoweringness (that which, among other things, inspires a feeling of humility), energy (creating an impression of immense vigour). Otto relates *mysterium* to two elements. Firstly, the numinous is experienced as “wholly other”. It is something truly amazing, as being totally outside our normal experience. Secondly, here is the element of fascination, in which one feels “a something that captivates and transports him with a strange ravishment, rising often enough to the pitch of dizzy intoxication.”⁸³ In particular, the hidden God is culminated as the wholly other. Otto describes the “wholly other” as “that which is quite beyond the sphere of the usual, the intelligible, and the familiar, which therefore falls quite outside the limits of the ‘canny’, and is contrasted with it, filling the mind with blank wonder and astonishment.”⁸⁴ Mystery is beyond our apprehension and comprehension because of our limited knowledge. When we encounter mystery we become in “a wonder that strikes us chill and numb”. In particular, for Luther, the holiness characterizes his hidden God as the one who cannot stand or tolerate human sin and thus consumes the sinners with fire of holy wrath. The holiness contains the concept of

⁸² Ibid., 5-7.

⁸³ Ibid., 31.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 26.

separation. It distinguishes Him clearly and absolutely from everything else. His holiness represents the transcendence of God in his very nature as the “Wholly Other”. Brunner remarks, “To be holy is the distinguishing mark peculiar to God alone; it is that which sets the Being of God apart from all other forms of being.”⁸⁵ He emphasises the otherness of God distinguishing him from the world by saying, “the Creator has no trace of the ‘world’ or of ‘the creaturely’ in Himself, and conversely, the creature as such has no trace of ‘non-creatureliness’, of ‘Divinity’, and therefore of ‘holiness’.”⁸⁶

In his special chapter of “The Numinous in Luther”, Otto finds the aspect of *mysterium tremendum* of Luther’s hidden God not only in “the stern judge demanding righteousness” but also “the creature, as such, in his ‘uncovered’ creaturehood. Luther’s God that Otto draws is the God beyond tracking out in his mystery and in his judgement, displaying his true majesty in his fearful marvels and incomprehensible judgement and in his essence hidden away from all reason. Above all, here, Otto closely relates the numinous temper to the doctrine of predestination in *The Bondage of the Will*, and thus both are in the inward bond of union.

Any encounter with Luther’s hidden God as *mysterium tremendum* is a shattering one, which drives one into “the depth and the abyss of despair”.⁸⁷ B. A. Gerrish indicates that Luther finds “a terror in his encounter with the hidden, predestinating God”, and believes that “the emotional, religious, or spiritual content of experience bursts the limits of the merely rational and conceptual.”⁸⁸ God’s hiddenness in this nonconceptional side of manifestation of the numinous is the particular character of the wholly other—in the terrible mysterious character of the nonrational as it confronts humans.

To sum up, our purpose of this chapter was to explore various aspects of Hiddenness

⁸⁵ Brunner, *Dogmatics*, vol. I, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 158.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 159.

⁸⁷ *LW* 33.190. (*Bondage of the Will*)

⁸⁸ Gerrish, “To the unknown God: Luther and Calvin on the Hiddenness of God”. 137. Cf. *LW* 33.190.

II in Luther so that we may compare with Calvin's Hiddenness II and provide some material for comparison of the relation between Hiddenness I and Hiddenness II which will be treated in Part C. In order to reach the purpose, we examined a naked and absolute God, a remodelled *potentia absoluta*, a God of Predestination, a God of Freedom, and finally, a God of *mysterium tremendum*: the awesome and the fascinating. Through this investigation, we find that Hiddenness II refers to God's hiding *behind* his revelation. Hiddenness II is related to certain aspects of God's mysterious, profound, inscrutable, dreadful, and awesome being whose intentions remain concealed from us. More concretely, what we found through the above five aspects of Hiddenness II in Luther are as follows:

First, Luther's hidden God beyond revelation is God in himself as "naked and absolute" God. The naked God [*Deus nudus*] as God in himself is described as "strange, terrifying, and indeterminate". He is the "bitterest of enemies" to human creatures in his nature and majesty. He crushes human weakness by his majesty, judges and destroys us relentlessly and harshly, and shatters the sinners with consuming fire.

Second, the hidden God is the God as a remodelled *potentia Dei absoluta*. Luther's concept of the hidden God was greatly influenced by scholasticism, especially nominalism. Luther, in his scheme of the hidden God, derives some useful elements from the traditional concept of the *potentia absoluta* such as the idea of "freedom", "potency", and "all in all". Luther recasts and modifies these ideas and thus the *potentia absoluta* changes from the hypothetical potential into a terrifying reality of the God working in all in all.

Third, the hidden God is a God of predestination. At the core of almost all the hot arguments surrounding the hidden God lies the riddle of Divine predestination. The God who predestinates one to eternal life and the other to perdition caused Luther to tremble with horror. For Luther, the "concealed and dreadful will" is "the most awesome secret of the Divine Majesty". Our salvation is totally in the hand of God.

Fourth, the hidden God is a God of freedom. The hidden God is free above all things in that he is the absolute standard, and works all in all, and in that he is not confined to the limits of his Word, and he alone is the origin of all things and he derives his being from himself. God's freedom presides over predestination.

Finally, the hidden God is a God of *mysterium tremendum*: the awesome and the fascinating. The trembling feeling of fear one experiences when one stands before his majesty is the very entrance to the *mysterium tremendum*. We fear and tremble due to our sinfulness and creatureliness. Creatures feel in awe that they are but dust and ashes before Creator. This creature feeling leads to the 'numinous,' described as *mysterium tremendum*.

Chapter IV. Hiddenness II in Calvin: God beyond Accommodation

This chapter is set out to investigate Calvin's understanding of the God hidden beyond accommodation, who is to be clearly distinguished from the God in accommodation, discussed in Chapter II. While Calvin's God in accommodation refers to the God revealed in the Bible, the God beyond accommodation refers to God himself whom we cannot tolerate and his glory and majesty consume and destroy us. Calvin's God beyond accommodation correlates to Luther's hidden God beyond revelation in that it refers to God himself as he is, not God as he looks to us. Calvin's principle idea is that though the mirror of Christ and the Bible reflect some true aspects of God himself, in a strict meaning, the knowledge through the mirror only shows us what God is like, not what God is in his essence. We should be careful not to minimize or restrict God himself under the frame of accommodation.

The major question of this chapter is what kind of God Calvin's God is in Hiddenness II. When Calvin's ideas are put together, a picture emerges of a God who can be characterized in several ways. He is God Himself as the "naked and absolute" God. As in Luther, we find some aspect of a remodelled *potentia absoluta*. Above all, he is a God of predestination who decides who will be elected and who will be reprobated according to his eternal decree. Here his hiddenness goes into the heart of darkness. God's hiddenness is so deep beyond our reason and understanding that he is described as the God of abyss and labyrinth. At the same time, in hiddenness, we find the sovereign God of freedom with sovereignty who works all in all. Thus the structure closely parallels the discussion of Luther in Chapter III, though it is not identical. Once Calvin's understanding of Hiddenness II has been explored in this chapter, we can move on to compare Luther and Calvin in the next.

1. God as the “Naked and Absolute” God

For Calvin, the God beyond accommodation refers to the naked God, the God of glory, holiness, and majesty. This naked God refers to God “apart from Jesus Christ,” who fills us with dread and consumes us. “Hence, as soon as mention is made of God, we must necessarily be filled with dread, and if we approach Him, his justice is like fire, which will utterly consume us.”¹ This God is terrifying and unapproachable to the mortal with sinful flesh. Calvin describes this terrifying aspect of God as follows:

...if the earth trembles at the presence of God, if the mountains melt, if darkness overspreads the heavens, what must happen to miserable men! Nay, since the immense majesty of God cannot be comprehended even by angels, but rather absorbs them; were his glory to shine on us it would destroy us, and reduce us to nothing, unless he sustained and protected us.²

This God is an awesome majesty. The mountains melt at the sight of Him, and without incomparable lenity, he would absorb and reduce to nothing a mortal man.³ People are so shaken and appalled when he manifests his glory that they cringe in terror. They are so powerfully seized by fear that they still barely exist.⁴ When humans become conscious of God’s presence and are confronted by the majesty of this naked God, they begin to experience their own littleness. In the light of his great majesty, we see our lowliness.⁵ The fear they feel when they stand in the presence of the naked God is the shuddering fear which arises from the greatness of God’s majesty, and his severity as the punishing God.⁶

¹ *Comm. on 1 Pet.* 1:20.

² *Comm. on Gen.* 32:30

³ *Comm. on Exod.* 24: 11-12

⁴ *Inst.* I.i.3.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Inst.* I.iv.4; IV.xv.9; II.v.10.

This naked God does not allow any complete apprehension of His glory by creatures, even by angels; “although the angels are said to see God’s face in a more excellent manner than men, still they do not apprehend the immense perfection of His glory, whereby they would be absorbed.”⁷

2. God as a Remodelled *Potentia Absoluta*

Calvin’s idea on the hidden God reflects his reaction against the scholastic concept of *potentia absoluta*. The *potentia Dei absoluta* refers to the total possibilities initially open to God, some of which were realized by creating the established order; the unrealized possibilities are now only hypothetically possible. In this context, Calvin states that if God wished to do so, he could cause the earth to bring forth fruit “without rain and without dew”.⁸ Calvin’s critical view on God’s absolute sovereignty is mainly focussed on some negative aspects implying God’s arbitrary hidden counsel. Some older scholars from Alexander Koyre to Gordon Leff and from Etienne Gilson to Edwin Iserloh argued that “the distinction between *potentia absoluta* and *potentia ordinata* led to futile and unproductive debates, made God into an arbitrary tyrant and put the very existence of the world and its history up for grasps, placing them beyond the ken of mankind.”⁹ Calvin is no exception. As Susan Schreiner says, “when Calvin thought of ‘absolute power’, he imagined an inordinate power that made the hiddenness of God a frightening abyss.”¹⁰ The fear of an unreliable or tyrannical God haunts Calvin. We find in his *Sermons on Job* that Calvin drew the God of absolute power according to this line.

⁷ *Comm. on Exod.* 33: 20.

⁸ CO 28:377. = *Sermons of M. Iohn Calvin upon the Fifth Book of Moses called Deuteronomie*, trans. Arther Golding (London: Henry Middleton, 1583; Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1993), 958a.

⁹ Anne Hudson and Michael Wilks, ed. *From Ockham to Wyclif* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987), 450.

¹⁰ Schreiner, *Where Shall Wisdom Be Found?* 118.

Job, then, presupposes that God uses toward him an absolute or lawless power as they term it; as if he should say, "I am the Lord and I will do whatever will seem good to me although it has no order of justice in it but plain lordly overruling." Here Job blasphemes God: for although the power of God is infinite, yet notwithstanding, to imagine it to be so absolute and lawless is as much to make him a Tyrant, which were completely contrary to his majesty.¹¹

Calvin vehemently attacks this scholastic *potentia absoluta*. However, he did not reject the whole concept of it, but developed it into an ideal concept suitable for his idea of the hidden God. The continuity of this concept in Calvin is emphasised by Ritschl: "In spite of Calvin's reluctance, we must judge that the idea of God which governs this doctrine comes to the same thing as the nominalistic *potentia absoluta*."¹² We will discuss more intensively how Calvin eliminates and gets over the negative image of the God of *potentia absoluta* later at the more proper place in detail.¹³ But here I just mention that though Calvin harshly attacks the scholastic distinction between God's two powers of *potentia absoluta* and *potentia ordinata*, to keep the image of the just, holy, and righteous God from that of a tyrant, he did not expel them but recast the concept of a God of the absolute power by eliminating its negative sides such as the separation between God's power and justice. Calvin's efforts are focussed on fighting against the capricious and arbitrary God and making God's power trustworthy, in harmony with God's justice. Steinmetz expresses this effort as follows: "Calvin seems to object to the distinction as such and not abuses in the application of the distinction. Yet he is eager to preserve in his own theology many of the

¹¹ *Sermons on Job* 23:1-7, p. 414.

¹² Ritschl, *Für Deutsche Theologie*, 1868, xiii. p. 107, quoted in Warfield, *Calvin and Calvinism* (Oxford University Press, New York, London, Toronto, 1931), 155.

¹³ See the below Chapter VI.2.b.1) "Against 'Capricious God *ex Lex*' in *Potentia Absoluta*".

points which the medieval distinction intended to protect.”¹⁴ Calvin preserves many beneficial points in the term of *potentia absoluta* such as God’s sovereign power, freedom, and transcendence, not losing God’s righteousness. It was through recasting the God of “absolute power” of the Middle Age that Calvin invents the image of the remodelled *potentia absoluta*—the hidden God, the God of sovereign power and justice as “providence, the determinative principle of all things”.

3. God of Predestination

In Calvin, the God beyond accommodation is a God of predestination. In 1558, in his *Defense of the Secret Providence of God*, Calvin defines predestination as follows: “But *predestination* I define to be, according to the Holy Scriptures, that free and unfettered counsel of God by which He rules all mankind, and all men and things, and all parts and particles of the world by His infinite wisdom and incomprehensible justice.”¹⁵ This broad definition is synonymous with Calvin’s understanding of providence.¹⁶ In 1559, Calvin’s definition of predestination gets out of the general concept of providence and becomes more concrete.

We call predestination God’s eternal decree, by which he compacted with himself what he willed to become of each man. For all are not created in equal condition; rather, eternal life is foreordained for some, eternal damnation for others. Therefore, as any man has been created to one or the other of these ends, we speak of him as predestined to life or to death.¹⁷

¹⁴ Steinmetz, *Calvin in Context*, 41.

¹⁵ CO 9:287 (*De Occulta Dei Providentia*), quoted in Warfield, *Calvin’s Calvinism*, 261.

¹⁶ *Inst.* I.xvi.4-9.

¹⁷ *Inst.* III.xxi.5.

This doctrine is well known as “double predestination”. Calvin was no pioneer in the assertion of this doctrine of predestination. The modern Augustinian school represented by Gregory of Rimini and Hugolino of Orvieto had already taught the doctrine of absolute double predestination, insisting that God chose some to eternal life, others to eternal condemnation, regardless of their anticipated merits. Therefore salvation totally lies outside the control of the individual.¹⁸

Calvin calls God’s decree on predestination *decretum horribile* (dreadful decree),¹⁹ because God made his decision before one is born or even before creation. “God not only foresaw the fall of the first man, and in him the ruin of his descendants, but also meted it out in accordance with his own decision.”²⁰ According to Calvin, predestination belongs to God’s most secret hidden activity. Predestination is like “looking through a glass darkly”, and involves the danger of getting lost in “a labyrinth which has no exit”.²¹ It is the ultimate hidden area beyond our understanding that God from all eternity elected some to salvation and some to perdition. The most pressing and baffling problem is the mystery of why particular individuals are believers and others not. The reason why some accept and others reject the gospel is to be sought only in God, in a decision of his will which is incomprehensible to us and which we must not even seek to penetrate. In his thesis of *Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God*, Calvin uses predestination to deal with this issue, by placing a decree or double decree in the hidden will of God. As we go through the dark tunnel of predestination, we get to a complete darkness. There all our “going through” will be stopped. Any attempt to go through this heart of darkness, the secret recess of predestination is not only futile, but also dangerous.

¹⁸ Cf. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, vol. I, 128-45 for more on medieval views of predestination.

¹⁹ *Inst.* III.xxiii.7.

²⁰ *Ibid.* .

²¹ *Comm on Ezek.* 18:31; *Inst* III.xxi.1.

Calvin understands that both election and reprobation are the sovereign, eternal counsel of God. “We call predestination God’s eternal decree, by which he determined with himself what he willed to become of each other.”²² Calvin insists that “God once established by *his eternal and unchangeable plan* those whom he long before determined once for all to receive unto salvation, and those whom, on the other hand, he would devote to destruction.”²³ This eternal decree, counsel or plan precedes the existence of the person elected; it precedes the fall of Adam. It precedes the creation of the world. That is why Calvin said that “all are not created in equal condition; rather, eternal life is foreordained for some, eternal damnation for others.”²⁴

Calvin believes that the cause for election or reprobation is not good work or sin. Good works may be the aim of election, but not the cause of it: “For he chose us in him before creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.”²⁵ God does not call those elect whom God foresaw to be holy and immaculate, but in order that they might be made so.²⁶ This echoes Augustine’s aphorism: “God’s grace does not find but makes those fit to be chosen.”²⁷ Similar logic is applied to the decree of reprobation. Calvin argues that the cause of reprobation is not sin. God chose some to destruction before the creation of the world. Sinful actions are surely related to the final condemnation for reprobation, but sin is only the cause of final condemnation, not the cause of the Divine decree of reprobation itself. Whether in election or reprobation, Calvin’s emphasis is simple: “it does not depend on human works, whether it is good works or sin.” In a similar way, the cause of election or reprobation is not foreknowledge of faith. Calvin’s logic is clear for this: “he

²² *Inst.* III.xxi.5.

²³ *Inst.* III.xxi.7.

²⁴ *Inst.* III.xxi.5.

²⁵ Eph. 1:4 in *Inst.* III. xxii.2.

²⁶ John Calvin, *Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God*, trans. J.K.S. Reid (James Clarke: London, 1961), 69.

²⁷ *Inst.* III.xxii.8.

(God) does not call them elect because they are about to believe, but in order that they may believe.”²⁸ Calvin is sure that faith is the result of election, not cause of it.

Calvin understands that the ultimate cause of election and reprobation is God’s sovereign will. For Calvin, at the fundamental level, we do not choose God, but God chooses us: “Esau and Jacob are brothers, born of the same parents, as yet enclosed in the same womb, not yet come forth into the light. In them all things are equal, not yet come forth into the light. In them all things are equal, yet God’s judgement of each is different. For he receives one and rejects the other.”²⁹ God considered nothing outside himself with which to be concerned in making his decree. It is clear that the grace of God deserves alone to be proclaimed in our election only if it is freely given. Now it will not be freely given if God, in choosing his own, considers what the works of each shall be.³⁰ Calvin focusses on the declaration of Exodus 33: 19, “I will show mercy on whom I will show mercy, and I will take pity on whom I will take pity.” Calvin interprets this: “God is moved to mercy for no other reason but that he wills to be merciful.” Calvin clarifies the cause of God’s decree of reprobation as the sovereign will of God, expressed in the New Testament as “his will and pleasure” (Eph. 1:5 NIV).

Predestination and reprobation are both “concealed” or “hidden”. The fact of double predestination is not hidden, but revealed.³¹ The Bible speaks of God’s predestination: why, when, how, who predestined people; horrible division between the elect and reprobate, and so on. The hidden thing in spite of the revealed fact is the why—why this one, not another. We have no idea of the identity of the elect. Like Luther, Calvin touches on a more serious point, declaring, “If you ask the reason why God corrects the vice in His elect, but

²⁸ *Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God*, 69.

²⁹ *Inst.* III.xxii.5.

³⁰ *Inst.* III.xxii.2.

³¹ *Inst.* III.xxi.5, 7; *Inst.* III.xxiv.1.

deems the reprobate unworthy of the same remedy, it is *hidden* in Himself.”³² Some may say that the cause is revealed in the Bible: “his will and pleasure” (Eph 1:5). However, we cannot penetrate into the veil of “his will and pleasure”. The first man fell because God had judged that to be expedient, but of why he had so judged, we know nothing. Why and how did God come to have such a will? The ‘why’ is completely hidden. The only thing we know is that it was due to his “will and pleasure”, and that God would not have done so, if he had not seen that this would redound to the glory of his name. Calvin strictly asks us to go no further than “his will and pleasure”. A further question of why God shows mercy to some, not others, is complete mystery. When God hardens or shows mercy to whom he wills, we are warned not to seek any cause beyond his will.³³ If we proceed to ask why God so willed, it is like “seeking something greater and higher than God’s will, which cannot be found.”³⁴ All questions towards the secret of predestination just stop here. “With Augustine, then, I do not hesitate to confess that something always precedes in the hidden judgements of God, but it is hidden. For how God condemns the impious and also justifies the impious is shut away from human understanding in inaccessible secret.”³⁵ Therefore, Calvin warned against those who attempt to push beyond the good pleasure of God’s will: “...it is very wicked merely to investigate the cause of all things that are. For his will is, and rightly ought to be, the cause of all things that are.”³⁶ Calvin feels awestruck and trembles, exclaiming, “The decree is dreadful, indeed, I confess.”³⁷

³² *Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God*, 116.

³³ *Inst.* III.xxii.11.

³⁴ *Inst.* III.xxiii.2.

³⁵ *Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God*, 146.

³⁶ *Inst.* III.xxiii.2.

³⁷ *Inst.* III.xxiii.7.

4. God of Freedom

In his *Sermons on Job*, Calvin declares, “God’s mighty power must not be shut up within the order of nature, nor within such bounds.”³⁸ A God of sovereignty is none other than a God of freedom. Dowey relates God’s predestination directly to the sovereignty and absolute freedom of God, who can damn his creature for his own glory.³⁹ God’s sovereignty, by which “God chooses some, and passes over others according to his own decision”,⁴⁰ always goes together with God’s freedom. Calvin states that God’s freedom is based on his sovereignty: “God is always been *free* to bestow his grace on whom he wills.”⁴¹ The free will of God is not only the ultimate cause of election but also of rejection. God must be free to choose whom he wills, otherwise his freedom is compromised by external considerations, and furthermore, the creator becomes subject to his creation. Election and reprobation are the entirely free act of the Divine will: “If we ask why God takes pity on some, and why he lets go of the others and leaves them, there is no other answer but it pleased him to do so.”⁴² The ultimate decision whether one is elected or reprobated is solely up to the freedom of God, to his sovereign will and free decision. Calvin retorts to whoever tries to find further cause than God’s free sovereignty, “let them answer why they are men rather than oxen or asses. Although it was in God’s power to make them dogs, he formed them in his own image.”⁴³

One step further, Calvin’s God does not depend on foreknowledge. While Bucer fused foreknowledge and predestination together,⁴⁴ Calvin distinguished clearly between

³⁸ *Sermons on Job* 23:8-12, 418.

³⁹ Dowey, *The Knowledge of God in Calvin’s Theology*, 210.

⁴⁰ *Inst.* III.xxii.1.

⁴¹ *Inst.* III.xxi.7.

⁴² *Sermon on Eph.* 1:3-4. (CR 51.259)

⁴³ *Inst.* III.xxiv.17 and also *Comm. on Malachi* 1; 2-6.

⁴⁴ Cf. Max Scheibe, *Calvins Prädestinationslehre*, (Halle a.S. : M. Niemeyer, 1897), 72.

predestination and foreknowledge and refused to subject predestination to foreknowledge. Calvin's God knows everything. But God in freedom acts independently of his foreknowledge. As François Wendel claims, Calvin rejects the causal relation between foreknowledge and predestination, whether the foreknowledge is of the merits of people or of the grace that God will grant them. It is because, if God's predestination is decided by God's foreknowledge, it violates God's freedom: it would make God subordinate to something outside his will: "only another way of placing the will of God in dependence upon a cause external to the act of the will itself, and therefore of limiting it."⁴⁵

The idea of predestination had been labeled as fatalism by Calvin's opponents. It is God's freedom that actually refutes such claims. God's freedom protects predestination from fatalism. Jaroslav Pelikan points out that the 'total difference between fate and predestination' is due to God's freedom. According to Pelikan, "fate, as used by the Stoics, referred to a necessity that compelled even God to fit into a preestablished order." However predestination, as used by Scripture, is "the free counsel of God" by which he "moderates both the human race and the individual parts of the world in accordance with his immense wisdom and justice."⁴⁶ Calvin's God is free to dispose for his creatures whatever he wills, death or life, command or prohibition.

Calvin's great proposition is that God's freedom inseparably goes together with righteousness, which is another essential attribute of God. God's freedom only swims in God's righteousness. Therefore, when God looks to abuse his freedom with any capricious whim beyond our standard of law, we should not suppose that God's free act loses his righteousness.

Sometimes, Calvin's God limits his freedom of his absolute power in relation to his

⁴⁵ Wendel, *Calvin*, 273.

⁴⁶ Jaroslav Pelikan, *Reformation of Church and Dogma (1300-1700)* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1984), 227-8.

creation. There are many instances in the Bible. When God ordered his people to proceed through the wilderness, not taking a shortcut (Exod 13:17), Calvin comments that “God was able to counteract all the evils in some other way, but as he is often accustomed to dealing with his people in a human way, he chose to adopt the method which was most suited to their infirmity.”⁴⁷ God could have found other ways to protect Israel from the heat of the sun and direct them in the darkness of the night without using a cloud by day and fire by night. However, Calvin’s God, “in order that his power might be more manifest, he chose to add also his visible presence, to remove all room for doubt”,⁴⁸ thus he acted familiarly in his accommodation to the ignorant people.⁴⁹

5. God of Abyss and Labyrinth

In the warning against the Divine decree found in his doctrine of predestination, Calvin uses many vivid and serious metaphors such as “terrifying darkness, a maze without exit, a pathless waste”⁵⁰ or “a bottomless whirlpool, inextricable snares, an abyss of sightless darkness”.⁵¹ Among these, the most typical metaphors he uses are abyss and labyrinth. Any attempt to inquire into the secret of predestination, the sacred precincts of Divine wisdom is to enter “a labyrinth from which he can find no exit”⁵² like “wandering in forbidden bypaths and thrusting upward to the heights”.⁵³ According to Richard A. Muller, this labyrinth refers to “the unfathomability of the Divine decree”.⁵⁴ In Calvin, abyss, in the broad sense, refers to “the mystery of God’s working”. In his citation of Psalm 36:6,

⁴⁷ *Comm. on Exod 13:17.*

⁴⁸ *Comm. on Exod 13:21.*

⁴⁹ *Comm. on Exod 13:21.*

⁵⁰ *Inst. III.xxi.1, 2.*

⁵¹ *Inst. III.xxiv.4.*

⁵² *Inst. III.xxi.1.*

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ Richard A. Muller, *The Unaccommodated Calvin* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 86.

Calvin indicates that “the judgements of God are beyond measure” and called by the Psalmists a “profound abyss”. In addition, in his *Commentary on Genesis* Calvin declares, “it is not without reason that the judgements of God are called an unfathomable abyss.” However, we should note that Calvin distinguishes the terms of God’s abyss from the general mysteries of God revealed in Scripture.⁵⁵ In its narrow meaning, Calvin uses God’s abyss to refer to God’s secret counsel of predestination: “What good will it do you in your mad search to plunge into [this] *abyss* (*deep*), which your own reason tells you will be your destruction?”⁵⁶; anyone who “attempts to break into the inner recesses of Divine wisdom buries himself in an *abyss* of sightless darkness.”⁵⁷ At the same time the word “abyss” evokes some awful sense of dread. This sense becomes deeper when we think that Calvin often refers to death and hell as the abyss, as Bouwsma points out.⁵⁸

Calvin relates the abyss of God to two kinds of “beyond”. One is beyond Christ, and the other is beyond the law. First of all, God’s abyss is related to some terrible aspect “beyond Christ”. As Calvin describes, in his *Commentary on 1 Peter*, “All thinking about God apart from Christ is *a vast abyss* which immediately swallows up all our perceptions.”⁵⁹ In addition, a God of abyss is related to a transcendental aspect “beyond law”. As Susan Schreiner puts it, Calvin struggled with a concept of a twofold justice—the secret Divine justice vs. the created justice.⁶⁰ While the creaturely justice is the justice accommodated to human imperfection such as the law God commanded to his people, the secret and hidden Divine justice is the infinite justice reflecting the perfect holiness and justice of God, which can be why he found fault in the righteous Job and even in angels. In a word, this speaks of God’s justice “beyond law”.

⁵⁵ See the below Chapter V.1. “Hiddenness I and Hiddenness II”.

⁵⁶ *Inst.* III.xxiii.5.

⁵⁷ *Inst.* III.xxiv.4.

⁵⁸ Bouwsma, *John Calvin: A Sixteenth-Century Portrait*, 33.

⁵⁹ *Comm. on Pet.* 1:20.

⁶⁰ For more discussion in detail, see the below Chapter VI.2.b.5 “Against ‘God as an Unjust and Unreliable

What theological effects do these metaphors of “abyss and labyrinth” produce? The strong message which Calvin gives us through these metaphors is that the Divine will is something mysterious, incomprehensible, and dreadful, not to be penetrated by human curiosity. They show how “somewhat difficult, very confusing, and even dangerous” to be curious about the forbidden area of predestination.⁶¹ Therefore, these metaphors create a sense of dread and awe and reverent adoration before the unlimited majesty and mystery of God rather than a desire for undue speculation in God’s secret counsel, which is a “wicked desire to inquire outside the way—*extra viam*”⁶²: “Yet his wonderful method of governing the universe is rightly called *an abyss*, because while it is hidden from us, we ought reverently to adore it.”⁶³

Where does this deeper hiddenness of labyrinth and abyss come from? Calvin simply states that it is because God wants to hide—the “things that the Lord has willed to be hid in himself.”⁶⁴ Then we come to the more substantial question: Why did God will to hide? Calvin answers this in three ways. First, God wanted our reverence and a sense of wonder rather than understanding: “the sublime wisdom, which he would have us revere but not understanding that through this also he should fill us with wonder.”⁶⁵ Calvin refers to Job’s acknowledgement that “I have uttered what I did not understand, things too marvelous for me which I did not know.” Calvin’s Job learned that the proper answer to the revelation in nature was not further questions about the justice of history, but rather silence and awe. Second, God did not think that our knowledge of God’s secret counsel would be beneficial for us in that God’s decision to reveal something presupposes God’s foreknowledge that it

Judge”.

⁶¹ *Inst.* III.xxi.1.

⁶² *Inst.* III.xxiv.4.

⁶³ *Inst.* I.xvii.2.[Italics mine]

⁶⁴ *Inst.* III.xxi.1.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

“would concern us and benefit us.”⁶⁶ Third, our heart is not so advanced as to be capable of handling these deep secrets. In the conclusion of his *Sermons on Job* 38:4-11, Calvin asks, if we are constrained to confess that we are far too weak to comprehend God’s loftiness in the things that lies before our eyes, “what will happen before his incomprehensible secrets, his narrow and hidden counsels when he works...in a fashion that seems strange to us and completely surmounts our capacity?”⁶⁷ In his comments on Job’s final act of repentance and silence, Calvin concludes that we must confess the weakness of our minds and admit that “we cannot climb so high” as to fathom God’s hidden counsel and “honor God in the things that we do not know, until he reveals unto us the things that are hidden from us as yet.”⁶⁸ Calvin states the proper condition to know God’s secret counsel: “We must walk, we must advance, we must grow, that our hearts may be capable of those things which we cannot yet grasp.”⁶⁹ Therefore, we perhaps expect to receive this knowledge on the Last Day: “if the Last Day finds us advancing, there we shall learn what we could not learn here.”⁷⁰

In conclusion, the purpose of this chapter was to investigate various aspects of Hiddenness II in Calvin, so that we may compare with Luther’s Hiddenness II. In order to reach the purpose, we explored five characteristic aspects of Hiddenness II in Calvin: a “naked and absolute” God, a remodelled *potentia absoluta*, a God of predestination, a God of freedom, a God of abyss and labyrinth. Our findings through this investigation are as follows:

Calvin shares Luther’s idea in many aspects in the area of Hiddenness II. Like Luther, it is deeply hidden: “God lies deeply hidden...”⁷¹ Calvin’s God beyond accommodation

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ *Sermons on Job* 38:12-17, p.697.

⁶⁸ *Sermons on Job* 42:1-5, p.739.

⁶⁹ *Inst.* III.xxi.2.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ *Inst.* III.ii.1.

refers to the hiddenness beyond revelation. “The Divine nature is infinitely exalted above the comprehension of our understanding.”⁷² God’s real essence is what only God knows. It is always hidden from us as a result of our finite human perception, even though God reveals himself in creation, in the Bible, and in the symbol. Therefore, God reveals himself, but God is always hidden at a deeper level. For this deeper hiddenness in God’s essence, Calvin confesses that “let us then willingly leave to God the knowledge of himself”, and he says in another place, “For he alone, according to Hilary, is a sufficient witness to himself, one who is not known except by himself.”⁷³ His essence is so enormous that it cannot really be searched out by us nor should it be. It must be adored rather than investigated.⁷⁴ As in Luther, Calvin’s Hiddenness II does not refer to the hiddenness caused by masks, but to the hiddenness of the naked and absolute God caused by the limitation of our perception which cannot stand the majestic and glorious God, just as our bare eyes look into the sun itself. At the core of this brilliant hiddenness lies the secret counsel of predestination and its deeper hiddenness is the hiddenness of labyrinth and abyss without any exit like a maze.

⁷² *Comm. on Ps.* 86:8.

⁷³ *Inst.* I.xiii.21.

⁷⁴ *Inst.* I.v.9.

Conclusion of Part B: Comparison of Hiddenness II in Luther and Calvin

In Chapter III and Chapter IV, we described Luther and Calvin's ideas on Hiddenness II, which refers to God beyond revelation and accommodation. Our aim was to investigate various aspects of Hiddenness II in Luther and Calvin and demonstrate how similar and how different they are. In a broad context, these chapters are to provide the basic material for the relation between God hidden and revealed in Part C. In order to reach this aim, first, we centered our inquiry around five distinct but closely related notions that appear in both Luther's and Calvin's theology. These notions are (1) the naked and absolute God, (2) *potentia absoluta* which both theologians reshaped, (3) predestination and (4) God's freedom; finally, we described (5) the *mysterium tremendum* (Luther) and (5) the abyss of God (Calvin) which refers to God's nature that is hidden. As a result of our inquiry we found that the theologies of Luther and Calvin at least concerning the above five notions are astonishingly similar. In Part C, we are going to turn our attention to the relation between God hidden and revealed, an analysis for which we have prepared through Part A and Part B. Before we turn to that, however, we can compare Luther and Calvin in Hiddenness II, based on Chapter III, and Chapter IV.

The foremost common characteristic of Hiddenness II in Luther and Calvin is that the hiddenness beyond and accommodation refers to "God beyond Christ". In the case of Luther, the God of Hiddenness II is the naked God who does not wear the mask of humanity, and is not "dressed and clothed in His Word and promise" as shown in Christ.⁷⁵ The absolute God destroys us like an iron wall. Luther calls him "Divine Majesty" distinguished from the incarnate God weeping for the perdition of the ungodly.⁷⁶ Calvin,

⁷⁵ LW. 12.312. (Psalm. 51:1)

⁷⁶ LW. 33.146. (*Bondage of the Will*)

too, describes the hidden God beyond accommodation as the abyss of God beyond Christ: “Hence all knowledge of God without Christ is a vast abyss which immediately swallows up all our thoughts.”⁷⁷ In confronting this hidden God without a mediator, we find “a naked majesty of God” who is dreadful, and like fire, wholly consumes whoever approaches him. Any inquiry about the hidden majesty without Christ just leads us to wander aimlessly in the vast abyss of God: “Thus of hidden majesty, Christ being overlooked, they largely and refinedly speculate; but with what success? They entangle themselves in astounding dotage, so that there is no end to their wanderings.”⁷⁸ Therefore, Calvin believes that we cannot believe in this hidden God except through Christ, in whom God in a manner makes himself little, so that he can accommodate himself to our comprehension.⁷⁹

Both Luther and Calvin maintain that the deepest depths of hiddenness are located in the problem of double predestination, where the awesome will of God makes individuals tremble with the possibility of rejection and loss. Like Luther, Calvin finds himself confronted with an “abyss of sightless darkness”. For Luther and Calvin, the ultimate mystery of a God of predestination depends on “God’s incomprehensible secret will”.

Calvin is one with Luther in his understanding that the hidden God beyond accommodation is the naked God, who is terrible, frightening, majestic, incomprehensible, and intolerable for us. Luther describes this naked God as God with a terrible, destructive power who crushes humanity and destroys us relentlessly and harshly, and thus makes us dread with fear and fall into despair. From this point of view, Calvin’s naked God is not much different than Luther’s hidden God. Calvin describes the naked God as a terrifying God whose fire consumes people.⁸⁰ Before this naked God, the earth trembles and the

⁷⁷ *Comm. on 1 Pet.* 1:21.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ *Comm. on 1 John* 3:2.

mountains melt. Calvin declares, “The immense majesty of God cannot be comprehended even by angels, but rather absorbs them; were his glory to shine on us it would destroy us, and reduce us to nothing, unless he sustained and protected us.”⁸¹ Luther and Calvin’s naked God reminds us of Brunner’s *Deus nudus*, “intolerable to all creation”.⁸²

If someone argues Luther and Calvin’s God must be unfair and tyrannical in his horrible plan of reprobation, both Luther and Calvin would prepare similar answers by appealing to a higher hidden justice transcending human notions of right and wrong as Augustine did.⁸³ In his *Lectures on Romans* Chapter 9, Luther vindicates God’s justice in election and reprobation by prescribing God’s will as not only the standard of “righteousness” and but also “the highest good”:

For the fact is that there neither is nor can be any other reason for his righteousness than His will. So why should man murmur that God does not act according to the Law, since this is impossible? Or will it be possible for God not to be God? Furthermore, since His will is the highest good, why are we not glad and willing and eager to see it be done, since it cannot possibly be evil?...For if they were willing to do what God wills, even if He should will that they be damned and reprobated, they would have no evil.⁸⁴

In his *Bondage of the Will*, against people’s criticism on this Divine overpowering will offending human reason, Luther adamantly depends on God’s hidden higher justice transcending human justice:

...the fault must be attributed not to the vessel, but to the potter...“Why does he find fault? Who can resist his will? This is what Reason can neither grasp nor endure, and what has offended all those men of outstanding talent who have been received for many centuries. Here they demand that God should act according to human justice, and do what seems right to them, or else cease to be God. The secrets of his majesty are no recommendation; let him give a reason why he is God, or why he wills or does what has

⁸¹ *Comm. on Gen.* 32:30.

⁸² Brunner, *Dogmatics*, vol. I, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 232.

⁸³ G. Bardy et al, ed. *De diversis quaestionibus ad Simplicianum, Quaestio II*, in *Oeuvres de Saint Augustine* 10 (Paris, 1952), 16.

⁸⁴ *LW* 25.386-7. (Rom 9:14)

no semblance of justice...⁸⁵

Calvin shows much similarity in his way of finding God's justice in reprobation because Calvin, too, appeals to the higher, hidden justice and God's will as the standard of righteousness.⁸⁶ In dealing with Calvin's reprobation, we need to distinguish between the plan of reprobation and its execution. In terms of God's execution of reprobation, Calvin's God is beyond blame because he condemns the reprobate for their corrupt nature and sin. Calvin regards human sin as the proximate cause of God's condemnation of the reprobates:

Accordingly, we should contemplate the evident cause of condemnation in the corrupt nature of humanity—which is closer to us—rather than seek a hidden and utterly incomprehensible cause in God's predestination.⁸⁷

For Calvin, this justice is not a target to be criticized. It is obviously reasonable and comprehensible. For him, the heart of matter lies in how we can explain God's justice in the plan of reprobation. Here, Calvin excludes God's foreknowledge of human sins from the ultimate cause of reprobation. In Calvin's view, the ultimate cause of reprobation is not any foreknowledge of human merits or sins or faith, but only God's will.

While the reprobate are the vessels of the just wrath of God, and the elect vessels of his compassion, the ground of the distinction is to be sought in *the pure will of God alone*...⁸⁸

However, justice in reprobation apart from God's consideration of his foreknown sin is hard to find some reasonable explication. It seems that the matter of justice has no room to intervene here. However, Calvin warns against any human curiosity to explore

⁸⁵ LW 33.206. (*Bondage of the Will*)

⁸⁶ This point will be discussed in detail in VI.2.b.1) "Against 'Capricious God *ex Lex*' in *Potentia Absoluta*"; 2) "Against 'God with Two Different Wills'"; 5) "Against 'God as an Unjust and Unreliable Judge'".

⁸⁶ LW 33.184-192. (*Bondage of the Will*)

⁸⁷ *Inst.* III.xxiii.8.

⁸⁸ J.K.S. Reid, ed. *Calvin: Theological Treatise*, in *The Library of Christian Classics*, vol. XXII (London: SCM Press LTD, 1954), 179. [Italics mine]

God's justice here.⁸⁹ Calvin, like Luther, just appeals to another incomprehensible higher justice deeply hidden in God himself. Calvin's great principle is that God's will as the ultimate cause of reprobation is tied to God's justice. Calvin directly connects God's will with justice: "*the pure will of God alone*, which is the supreme rule of justice";⁹⁰ "For God's will is so much the highest rule of righteousness that whatever he wills, by the very fact that he wills it, must be considered righteous."⁹¹

Therefore, it is natural that Calvin connects the decree of reprobation with God's incomprehensible justice.

For if predestination is nothing but the meting out of Divine justice—secret, indeed, but blameless—because it is certain that they were not unworthy to be predestined to this condition, it is equally certain that the destruction they undergo by predestination is also most just.⁹²

Against an opponent's charge that "God had by his pure and mere will created the greatest part of the world to perdition", Calvin once again connects God's decree with God's justice.

For although God did certainly decree from the beginning everything which should befall the race of man, yet such a manner of speech as the saying that the end or object of God's work of creation was destruction or perdition, is no where to be found in my writings... *God never decrees anything but with the most righteous reason.*⁹³

As Calvin alleges, this Divine justice is a higher hidden justice beyond human justice: "...but if froward tongue clamor, not to be ashamed of this exclamation of his: 'Who are you, O man, to argue with God?' [Rom. 9:20] For as Augustine truly contends, they who measure Divine justice by the standard of human justice are acting perversely."⁹⁴

⁸⁹ *Inst.* III.xxiii.4-7.

⁹⁰ *Calvin: Theological Treatise*, 179. [Italics mine]

⁹¹ *Inst.* III.xxiii.2. This point will be discussed in detail in VI. 2. b. 1) "Against 'Capricious God *ex lex*' in *Potentia absoluta*"; 2) "Against 'God with Two Different Wills'"; 5) "Against 'God as an Unjust and Unreliable Judge'".

⁹² *Inst.* III.xxiii.8

⁹³ "Defense of Secret Providence of God", in *Theological Treatises*, 266f. (OC 9.288)

⁹⁴ *Inst.* III.xxiv.17.

The striking contrast in reprobation in Luther and Calvin is found in the concrete means and style by which the hidden God executes his secret plans of reprobation in history. In general, God's action which Luther describes to accomplish his plan of reprobation is less active than Calvin's hidden God. What Luther largely depends on to explain the way to fulfill his secret plan of reprobation is the philosophical concept of "necessity". In *The Bondage of the Will*,⁹⁵ Luther understands that necessity comes from God's foreknowledge and omnipotence. If God foreknows a thing, the thing necessarily happens. There is no such thing as free choice. If God foreknows that Judas will betray, whichever God has foreknown will necessarily come about, or else God will be mistaken in his foreknowing and predicting, which is impossible. Here Luther emphasises the bondage of the human will which necessarily follows God's secret plan, just as a train is necessarily supposed to move on the rail already laid according to the given schedule. Luther's use of philosophical terms and his emphasis on the bondage of the human will under God's necessity tend to diminish the powerful dynamic image of God to fulfill his secret plan of reprobation. Here what God is supposed to do is to plan reprobation and then leave it to the frame of "necessity" through his foreknowledge and omnipotence. Unlike Luther, Calvin's hidden God works *more powerfully and more actively* to fulfill his plan of reprobation. Calvin calls God's secret plan of reprobation "the preparation for destruction".⁹⁶ Calvin's hidden God does not just allow but actively strives to fulfill his secret plans. As Calvin cites Augustine, "God does not permit but governs by his power."⁹⁷ Furthermore, Calvin goes so far as to describe the hidden God as the one who *prevents* the reprobate from going towards salvation through more concrete ways. He actively works to fulfill his eternal plan for the reprobate.

As God by the effectual working of his call to the elect perfects the salvation to which by his eternal plan he has destined them, so he has his judgments against the reprobate, by which he *executes his plan for them*. What of those, then, whom he created for dishonor in

⁹⁵ LW 33.184-192. (*Bondage of the Will*)

⁹⁶ *Inst.* III.xxiii.1.

⁹⁷ *Inst.* III.xxiii.1; Augustine, against Julian V. iii. 13. (MPL 44. 790f.: tr. FC 35.254 f.)

life and destruction in death, to become the instruments of his wrath and examples of his severity? That they may come to their end, he sometimes *deprives* them of the capacity to hear his word; at other times he, rather, *blinds* and *stuns* them by the preaching of it. Since there are innumerable examples of the first effect, let us choose one only, which is clearer and more notable than the rest. Before the advent of Christ about four thousand years passed, during which he *hid the light of his saving doctrine from all the Gentiles*. If anyone answers that he did not make them share in this great benefit because he adjudged them unworthy, their descendants will be not a whit more worthy. In addition to experience, Malachi is an effective witness of this matter: for while exposing their unbelief mixed with blasphemies, he announces that a redeemer will come [Mal.4:1 ff.]. Why then is he given to the latter rather than the former? He who here seeks a deeper cause than God's secret and inscrutable plan will torment himself to no purpose.⁹⁸

Here, Calvin's God is described as the one who intentionally and positively *executes his plan for them*. Calvin enumerates several concrete ways in God's active work to fulfill his eternal plan. The first way is that he "sometimes *deprives* them (the reprobate) of the capacity to hear his word; at other times he, rather, *blinds* and *stuns* them by the preaching of it." Here those words as "deprive" "blind" or "stun" are not passive and static verbs, but active and intentional verbs representing God's positive action, Calvin employs active verbs in showing how positively and intentionally God fulfills his eternal plan for the reprobate. Calvin clearly says that God *intends* to increase the blindness of the reprobate.⁹⁹ The hidden God "makes the heart of this people stubborn, and their ears heavy, and shut their ears." God actively works in their heart so that he fulfills his secret plan of predestination.¹⁰⁰ As we see in the case of prophets in the Old Testament such as Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and Isaiah, "he (God) directs his voice to them but in order that they may become more blind; he sets forth doctrine but so that they may grow even more stupid; he employs a remedy but so that they may not be healed."¹⁰¹ In the New Testament, the parables are the means God employed for executing his secret plan: "to those whom he pleases not to illumine, God transmits his doctrine wrapped in enigmas in order that they

⁹⁸ *Inst.*, III.xxiv.12.

⁹⁹ *Inst.*, III.xxiv.13.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

may not be profit by it except to be cast into great stupidity.”¹⁰² Even if the gospel is preached openly, only those who are granted the effectual agency of the Holy Spirit can believe in Jesus Christ. It is the key of God’s secret work in the reprobate for God to withdraw the effectual working of the Holy Spirit.¹⁰³ Furthermore, Calvin’s hidden God *blocks* the gospel to the reprobate by placing them in a time or place they cannot access to the light of gospel: “Before the advent of Christ about four thousand years passed, during which he *hid the light of his saving doctrine from all the Gentiles*.” The word, “*hid*” tells us of God’s intentional effort to prevent the reprobate from being saved. In this way “the supreme God, then, makes way for his predestination when he leaves in blindness those whom he has once condemned and deprived of participation in his light.”¹⁰⁴ In a word, unlike Luther, Calvin is so bold as to say that “by his just and irreprehensible but incomprehensible judgement he [God] has *barred the door life* to those whom he has given over to damnation.”¹⁰⁵

Calvin, more than Luther, prefers to use the imagery of abyss and labyrinth as the expression of the God of Hiddenness II.¹⁰⁶ Calvin depicts the God beyond accommodation as a maze without exit and a pathless waste. This can be interpreted as Calvin’s emphasis that the Divine will is so great, mysterious, incomprehensible, and unfathomable for our feeble mind or human curiosity that we cannot penetrate. This reflects Calvin’s view on our proper attitude towards the hidden God: a sense of dread and awe and reverent adoration before the unlimited majesty and mystery of God rather than undue speculation in God’s secret counsel.

In the matter of how we should treat Hiddenness II beyond revelation, we find a common attitude in Luther and Calvin—that it is none of our business. Calvin echoes Luther in warning against speculative theology that attempts to know the essence of God

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ *Inst.*, III.xxiv.2.

¹⁰⁴ *Inst.*, III.xxiv.13.

¹⁰⁵ *Inst.*, III.xxi.7.

¹⁰⁶ For Hiddenness II, just confer to *Inst.* I.17.2 ; Deut. 29.29; Ps. 36.6; Rom. 11:33-34 etc.

from his works. Luther says, “To the extent, therefore, that God hides himself and wills to be unknown to us, it is no business of ours.”¹⁰⁷ “What is above us is none of our business...Let God rather keep His decrees and mysteries in hiding.”¹⁰⁸ Luther exhibited a deep-seated skepticism concerning the way of “speculation” to know the essence of God and warns against it: “Theology is heaven, yes even the kingdom of heaven; man however is earth and his speculations are smoke.”¹⁰⁹ Luther rejects the theology of glory seeking to know God directly in his obviously Divine power, wisdom, and glory. Luther insists that those who seek God through reasoning power or philosophical reflection or contemplation of created reality aim at the knowledge of God as he is in his naked majesty. Luther is strongly opposed to any attempt to uncover the naked being of God through speculative reason or religious ecstasy. Such a quest is doomed to failure. Calvin has a similar view. Calvin warns against too much curiosity about the hidden will of God: “it is very wicked merely to investigate the causes of God’s will.”¹¹⁰ We must carefully study what is written, but “halt before the mysteries, lest we be condemned for excessive curiosity on the one hand or for ingratitude on the other.”¹¹¹ Calvin is completely against all speculations. Calvin, like Luther, warns us not to stare into darkness of the Divine decrees, but look to the benevolence of God in the Incarnation. In Calvin, “God’s essence is rather to be adored than minutely investigated.”¹¹²

Both Luther and Calvin want to throw a spotlight on God’s freedom through Hiddenness II. Both believe that freedom is God’s most essential attribute to “let God be God.”¹¹³ Both understand that the hidden God is free over all things, working all in all,

¹⁰⁷ LW 33.139. (*Bondage of the Will*)

¹⁰⁸ WA 43, 458f. = LW 5.44f. (Gen 26.9)

¹⁰⁹ WA 9.65. (*Rand Bemerkungen Luthers*): “(Volui autem dicere) theologia est celum, immo regnum celorum, homo autem terra et ejus speculationes fumi.”

¹¹⁰ Steinmetz, *Calvin in Context*, 48.

¹¹¹ *Inst.* III.xxi.4.

¹¹² *Inst.*, I.v.9.

¹¹³ Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, 274. Paul Althaus indicates that Luther’s assertion of “Let God be God” implicitly presupposes that God alone works all in all together with the accompanying

and thus life and death, and blessing and curse belong to the awesome God who works in freedom. Both are convinced that the hidden God is the absolute standard. However, we find some difference between Luther and Calvin. While Luther is bold to insist that “whoever does not know that God is subject to no law, let him be silent; in God there is nothing but will, will, will”,¹¹⁴ Calvin is very careful and sensitive to the concept of “God under no law”. Calvin is ambivalent about this idea. He would agree to “God under no law” if it means that God transcends the law, as he argues about double justice in his *Sermons on Job*.¹¹⁵ But, Calvin would strongly reject the concept of “God under no law”, if it is understood as “God *ex lex* (God out of law)” referring to a lawless and thus tyrannical God: “We fancy no lawless god who is a law unto himself.”¹¹⁶ In this context, this epithet “lawless” and the concept of “god who is a law unto himself” do not look well matched, because while the epithet “lawless” is very negative concept to Calvin, this “god who is a law unto himself” is the exact God Calvin consistently tries to draw to prove God’s sovereignty and vindicate God’s transcending righteousness. Therefore, we can conclude that Calvin’s struggle with this term “lawless” vividly reflects his subtle conflict and ambivalence about “God under no law”. Calvin wants ‘God under no law’ to be interpreted as God who transcends the law beyond accommodation while still remaining faithful to his law in accommodation.

Another sharp contrast between Luther and Calvin on God’s freedom is that whereas Luther gives God freedom over his Word, Calvin is reluctant to put God’s Word in a sharp antithesis with the hidden God. Calvin’s continuous effort is to put the hidden God of freedom in harmony with his Word, because God’s attributes cannot be separable: this would fragment God. According to Calvin’s logic, God’s freedom and power always go

foreknowledge.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ For this, see the below Chapter VI.2.b.5) “Against ‘God as an Unjust and Unreliable Judge’”.

¹¹⁶ *Inst.* III.xxiii.2.

together with God's righteousness.

Besides, we find some difference in their understanding of the relation of foreknowledge and predestination. Augustine insisted that the eternal decree of God could not be determined by an external cause such as the future behavior of each individual, but since God knew in advance what he would bring about in them, predestination and foreknowledge coincide.¹¹⁷ According to Wendel, Luther supported Augustine's view, while Calvin did not.¹¹⁸ However, I believe that, on the contrary, Calvin follows Augustine's view more faithfully than Luther. First of all, we can elicit three points from Augustine's view: (1) the independence of predestination from foreknowledge; (2) God's foreknowledge of his predestination; (3) the factual coincidence between them. We find here that clear distinction and coincidence go together in Augustine. However, when Augustine says, "Since God knew in advance what he would bring about in them, predestination and foreknowledge coincided in fact", we should notice that coincidence refers to time sequence, not logical sequence. Luther stresses the unity so emphatically as to raise knowledge on an equivalent level with predestination, and thus seems to blur the clear distinction between them. Luther understands that knowledge and predestination are closely interdependent: "Do you then believe that he foreknows without willing or wills without knowing? If he foreknows as he wills, then his will is eternal and unchanging (because his nature is so), and if he wills as he foreknows, then his knowledge is eternal and unchanging (because his nature is so)."¹¹⁹ Luther consistently imparts foreknowledge with the attribute of "necessary and immutable", raising the position of foreknowledge to the equal level of predestination as the cause of all things.¹²⁰ However, unlike Luther, Calvin makes it clear that predestination does not depend on foreknowledge, abusing any

¹¹⁷ Augustine, *De dono perseverentiae*, 14, quoted in Wendel, *Calvin*, 271.

¹¹⁸ Wendel, *Calvin*, 271-272.

¹¹⁹ LW 33.37. (*Bondage of the Will*)

¹²⁰ LW 33.42. (*Bondage of the Will*)

attempt to make predestination subject to foreknowledge: “By thus covering election with the veil of foreknowledge, they not only obscure it but feign that it has its origin elsewhere.”¹²¹ Especially, Calvin is against Pighius who makes foreknowledge the cause of predestination,¹²² claiming that “it is confusing everything to say that God elects and rejects according to his foresight of this or that.”¹²³ Like Augustine, he admits that God foreknows what he predestined, and at the same time, he insists that God foreknows because he predestines; “But since he foresees future events only by reason of the fact that he decreed that they take place, they vainly raise a quarrel over foreknowledge, when it is clear that all things take place rather by his discrimination and bidding.”¹²⁴ For Calvin, foreknowledge is the result of predestination in logical sequence, though it coincides in time sequence.

We find a striking difference in Luther and Calvin in that Luther drives the image of the hidden God into far deeper and more drastic opposition to the revealed God of love and mercy than Calvin does. It makes the bipolarity between the hidden God and the revealed God sharply distinctive in our perception. He calls the hidden God the “bitterest of enemies” or “devil”¹²⁵ and regards his will as “sinister” and “diabolic”. He admonishes people to learn to flee from God to God, to rest in the *Deus revelatus et incarnatus*. However, Calvin is reluctant to drive the image of the hidden God to that direction too harshly. Though Calvin characterizes the hidden God as naked, absolute, and majestic God who consumes sinners, Calvin is reluctant to call this hidden God “sinister or diabolic”—morally evil.

Both Luther and Calvin believe that the human natural response to the hidden God is to “tremble with fear”. Luther’s hidden God is characterized by Otto as the *mysterium*

¹²¹ *Inst.* III.xxii.1.

¹²² *Inst.* III.xxi.5. Calvin quotes Pighius, *De libero* IV, fo. 64b f.; IX. ii, fo. 159b. Cf. Wendel, *Calvin*, 271.

¹²³ *Inst.* III.xxi.5.

¹²⁴ *Inst.* III.xxiii.6. [Italics mine]

tremendum: the awesome and the fascinating. This God is an overwhelming and terrifying God wielding majestic power, full of abyss, chasm, chaos, and even horror. He is the naked and abyssal God, who threatens, shatters, and throws us into the abyss of despair. The sinful people dread with fear before his holiness. Our “uncovered” creaturehood makes us unable to stand before the God of “awesome, frightening, numinous Divine power”.¹²⁶ Like Luther’s God, Calvin’s God of holiness destroys and reduces the sinful man to nothing by his incomprehensible brightness.¹²⁷ The naked God’s majesty and glory will overwhelm and annihilate anybody exposed to them: “...who, when he manifests his glory, are so shaken and struck dumb as to be laid low by the dread of death—are in fact overwhelmed by it and almost annihilated.”¹²⁸ Dowey draws attention to what he calls “the creaturely feeling” in Calvin: in particular, Dowey relates it to the special feeling of “horror and stupor (I.i.3)” which Abraham, Job and Elias felt stricken and overcome in the presence of God.¹²⁹ Dowey comments that the numinous in Calvin’s theology is “a suprarational awareness of God’s majesty to which man responds in fear” and more fundamentally he states that “the *sensus divinitatis*, the direct revelation of God to the soul of man as creature, is an intensely numinous awareness.”¹³⁰

Both Luther and Calvin employ a scholastic thinking about the *potentia absoluta* for their insight into the hidden God. Though Luther and Calvin severely criticized the concept itself, both of them were attracted to some of its elements. As we have seen, Luther keeps such aspects as “freedom”, “potent”, and “all in all” which the traditional concept of the *potentia absoluta* kept, but eliminates the element of potentiality.¹³¹ Calvin, like Luther, prefers to find God’s freedom, transcendence, and sovereign power in the traditional

¹²⁵ LW 12.312. (Psalm. 51:1)

¹²⁶ Tracy, “The Hidden God: The Divine Other of Liberation”, 12.

¹²⁷ *Comm. on Exod.* 33:20.

¹²⁸ *Inst.* I.i.3.

¹²⁹ Dowey, *The Knowledge of God in Calvin’s Theology*, 55. Cf. *Comm. on Exod.* 33:20.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 55-56.

¹³¹ LW 33.189. (*Bondage of the Will*)

concept of the *potentia absoluta*. Just as Luther transformed the area of potentiality into the actual area, Calvin insists that the *potentia absoluta* does not only “indicate what God could have done but what he actually does.”¹³² More emphatically than Luther, Calvin focussed his attack on the image of the power of an arbitrary tyrant, as it supposes that God’s power is separated from his justice. It is unthinkable for Calvin that the Divine attributes can be separated. God’s justice and power go together in union.¹³³

Luther and Calvin employ faith and the illumination of the Holy Spirit as the useful standard to distinguish between Hiddenness I and Hiddenness II. Luther understands that, in Hiddenness I, faith lets us see the God hidden under the mask, which reason or nature cannot. Reason just finds the helpless sinner on the Cross. It is only faith that can find the hidden God of power, wisdom, and glory under the mask of the crucified Jesus, but reason and nature cannot do it. In Hiddenness II, even faith stops penetrating the mystery of the hidden will: “With regard to God, insofar as he has not been revealed, *there is no faith*, no knowledge, and no understanding”;¹³⁴ “If faith lingers too long, tries to penetrate the mystery of the hidden will, it can only lose itself in the abyss of the unknown God.”¹³⁵ Likewise, Calvin maintains that while the faithful are allowed to access the mystery of God in the Bible which belongs to Hiddenness I, the hidden council is forbidden and closed even to the faithful. Luther and Calvin’s understanding concurs in the idea of the Holy Spirit as a guide or illumination in Hiddenness I and Hiddenness II. While Hiddenness I can be penetrated and revealed by faith through the illumination of the Holy Spirit, Hiddenness II is the very area where faith and the illumination of the Holy Spirit do not work or penetrate. Therefore, Luther and Calvin ask us to stop and fix our standing before the door of abyss. We can follow the Holy Spirit as our guide in the area of hiddenness in

¹³² H.A. Oberman, “The ‘Extra’ Dimension in the theology of Calvin”, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 21 (1970), 63.

¹³³ *Sermons on Job* 23:1-7, 415.

¹³⁴ LW.5.44. (Gen 26:9)

abyss, but the Holy Spirit's guidance cannot take us to the hiddenness in abyss represented by "His hidden counsel".¹³⁶

Compared to Luther, Calvin develops the idea of the hidden justice "beyond law" in a more systematic way. This aspect attracts more attention from Calvin who treats this matter in his *Commentary on Job*, struggling with a concept of a twofold justice—the secret Divine justice vs. the low created justice.¹³⁷ Here secret Divine justice reflects the perfect holiness and justice of God before which the righteous Job and even angels can be blamed. This justice provides a foundation of justice in God's judgement even before such questions as why innocent children should die by the hand of evil persons. For Calvin, the dialectic relation between two kinds of justice affords us two messages: God's judgement is too high beyond us and God is trustworthy and reliable to his promise.

In Parts A and B, we have examined Hiddenness I and Hiddenness II in Luther and Calvin. The great dissimilarity between Hiddenness I and Hiddenness II raises significant questions. Can we harmonize them in any way, or is there an impassable ravine between them? To what extent are they identical, or antithetical? From these questions, we naturally proceed into the realm where there has been much controversy among scholars, the analysis of the relation between Hiddenness I and Hiddenness II.

¹³⁵ Gerrish, "To the Unknown God": Luther and Calvin on the Hiddenness of God", 140.

¹³⁶ *Comm on Rom.* 11:34.

¹³⁷ For a detailed account, see the below Chapter VI.2.b.5) "Against 'God as an Unjust and Unreliable Judge'".

Part C. The Relation between God Hidden and Revealed in Luther and Calvin

Introduction

Part C is the apex of this thesis dealing with the relation between God hidden and revealed in Luther and Calvin. We will discuss the relation, on what has been established in Part A and Part B.

The relation between the hidden God and the revealed God has been one of the serious issues that have caused much discussion among scholars. The question of whether we can harmonize ‘Hiddenness I’ and ‘Hiddenness II’,¹ has been raised in modern theological debate. First of all, it will become apparent in what follows that our understanding of Luther completely rejects Otto Ritschl’s extreme view. Ritschl judges that Luther’s composition of the concept of God in a dualistic way painfully reminds us of the heretical view of Marcion that there are two different Gods. This will be refuted in Chapter V, especially in the part dealing with Luther’s efforts to reveal the unity of God. Our main line of inquiry will be into the issue of whether the relation between the hidden God and the revealed God is *antithetical* or *identical*.² I will argue that, in Luther, it is possible to harmonize these two in a broader perspective of a *Divine paradox*.

The relation between the hidden God and the revealed God has two dimensions: the relation between the hidden God and the revealed God, first, in Hiddenness I and then, in Hiddenness II, because the relation in Hiddenness II has some distinction from the

¹ Gerrish distinguishes between Hiddenness I and Hiddenness II. He refers to ‘hiddenness in revelation’ by Hiddenness I and ‘hiddenness beyond revelation’ by Hiddenness II.

² Gerrish, in his article, “‘To the Unknown God’: Luther and Calvin on the Hiddenness of God”, 133, distinguishes between two groups on the relation between the hidden God and the revealed God: *identical* (F. Kattenbusch, Erich Seeberg), or *antithetical* (Theodosius Harnack, the two Ritschls, Reinhold Seeberg, Hirsh, Elert, and Holl). But I understand that Karl Holl should rightly be put in the former group rather than the latter group. For this, see the below Chapter V.1. “Two Streams of Scholastic Views on the Relation of God Hidden and Revealed”.

relation in Hiddenness I. In both dimensions, the central question will be whether the relation between the hidden God and the revealed God is in unity or in contradiction. I will insist that both Luther and Calvin have some different emphasis and method, but have the same idea of *God's unity in the apparent contradiction*.

Besides, we will reconsider Brunner’s view that “Calvin does not make Luther’s distinction—which Luther deems so important—between the ‘revealed’ and the ‘hidden’ will of God and if he does think of it, he takes a quite different view.”³ For the answer, in Chapter VI, I will deal with Calvin’s distinction between Hiddenness I and Hiddenness II, and between the hidden will and the revealed will. Thus I will try to show that Calvin has a substantial theory of the hidden God.

As I remarked at the outset of this thesis, we notice a sharp dichotomy between Luther’s God of love and forgiveness and Calvin’s God of predestination and majesty which scholars such as Reinhold Seeberg, Max Weber, and Ernst Troeltsch and Randall Zachman have made.

[Diagram 1]

	Luther’s God	Calvin’s God
Reinhold Seeberg	Omnipotent energy of Love represented in Christ	Omnipotent will rules throughout the world. ⁴
Max Weber	Merciful Father in heaven of the New Testament.	Transcendental being deciding the fate of every individual in his incomprehensible decree. ⁵
Ernst Troeltsch	God of mercy and grace who forgives sins	Spirit of active energy of predestination and majesty. ⁶
Randall Zachman	God dying for the forgiveness of sinners according to God’s revealed will	God predestinating some to salvation and most to damnation according to his hidden and majestic will. ⁷

³ Emil Brunner, *Dogmatics*, vol. I, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 325.
⁴ Seeberg, *The History of Doctrines*, vol. II, 416.
⁵ Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, 103-4.
⁶ Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*, vol. 2, 584.
⁷ Zachman, *The Assurance of Faith*, 3.

I do not accept these arguments for a dichotomy. Can we call Luther's God just a God of love and forgiveness rather than a God of predestination and wrath, who judges and damns people into perdition with an inscrutable will? Can we say that Calvin's God is the opposite? This will be treated more intensively in the comparative analysis in Section 6 of Chapter V and Section 4 of Chapter VI.

Along with this, we will discuss the relation between God's love and wrath. The relation between God's love and God's wrath is one of the core aspects which let us see more clearly the relation between God hidden and revealed. Including Brunner and Barth, the theological world has suggested various views on it, but has not arrived at any unified view so far. In particular, we will have much to say on Luther's view.

Another point of this section of the thesis will be the discussion of the relation between the Holy Spirit and the hidden God. The Holy Spirit has been relatively neglected in the discussion of the hidden God because the discussion mainly focusses on the relation between the Father as the hidden God and the Son as the revealed God. Our proper understanding of the Holy Spirit in the frame of the hidden God can provide us some clues to reveal the relation between the traditional Trinity and the hidden God doctrine. Here, an issue will be raised: can the doctrine of the hidden God and the doctrine of Trinity be harmonized?

The structure of Part C will be composed of three parts: the relation between God hidden and revealed in Luther in Chapter V; the relation in Calvin in Chapter VI; and, in the conclusion of this chapter, a comparison. I understand that the relation between God hidden and revealed has multifarious facets which are inseparably interrelated, and which reflect the various aspects of the relation between God hidden and revealed. These multifarious facets include the relation between God and the mask (modes of accommodation), Hiddenness I and Hiddenness II, God's hidden will and revealed will,

a God of love and a God of predestination, God's love and wrath, law and gospel, and the Holy Spirit and the hidden God. In particular, we have already discussed in Chapter I. 4 and Chapter II. 7 for our proper understanding of Hiddenness I, the relation between God and the mask, especially focussing on how God exists in masks and modes of accommodation. I intend to explore these multifarious facets further in Chapters V and VI, to arrive at a deeper and more comprehensive reflection of the relation of God hidden and revealed. More concretely, I discuss "Hiddenness I and Hiddenness II" in Chapter V. 2 and Chapter VI. 1; "God's hidden will and revealed will" in Chapter V. 3 and Chapter VI. 2; "God's love and wrath" in Chapter V. 4 and Chapter VI. 2; "God of love and God of predestination" in Chapter V. 4 and Chapter VI. 4; "law and gospel" in Chapter V. 5; and "the Holy Spirit and the hidden God" in Chapter V. 7 and Chapter VI. 5. In the final sections of Chapters V and VI, we will discuss "the knowledge of the hidden God and the function of faith in it".

Chapter V. The Relation between God Hidden and Revealed in Luther

This chapter is at the crux of the argument of this thesis, because we are going to pursue diverse aspects of the question of the right relation between Luther's God hidden and revealed. Our initial investigation of Luther will pave the way for the comparison with Calvin's view, to be discussed later. In scholastic debate, diverse opinions have been on the relation of Luther's God hidden and revealed. Here, we will notice two lines of argument, already mentioned: *identical* or *antithetical*.

For a proper understanding of the relation between the relation between God hidden and revealed, we need to distinguish between the relation in Hiddenness I and the relation in Hiddenness II. For Luther, Hiddenness I and Hiddenness II are clearly distinguished and the relation between the hidden God and the revealed God takes on different aspects in Hiddenness I and Hiddenness II respectively. Any consideration of Luther without taking into account his distinction between Hiddenness I and Hiddenness II would bring about a one-sided conclusion. For example, F. Kattenbusch who focusses on Hiddenness I rather than Hiddenness II concludes that the *Deus absconditus* and the *Deus revelatus* are identical.⁸ Besides, Hellmut Bandt's conclusion that "in the final analysis, there is no hiddenness of God for Luther other than the hidden form of his revelation",⁹ is based on Hiddenness I rather than Hiddenness II. McGrath indicates that this conclusion of Hellmut Bandt is no longer valid in terms of the hiddenness represented in *The Bondage of the Will* (1525), where the contradiction between the hidden God and the revealed God is greatly emphasised.¹⁰ Erich Seeberg tries to exclude Hiddenness II, overemphasizing Hiddenness I, because he is more interested in

⁸ Kattenbusch, *Deus Absconditus bei Luther*, 170-214; 204.

⁹ Hellmut Bandt, *Luthers Lehre vom Verborgenen Gott*, 94. "Es gibt für Luther letzten Endes keine andere Vervorgenheit Gottes als die Vervorgenheitsgestalt seiner Offenbarung."

¹⁰ McGrath, *Luther's Theology of the Cross*, 166.

the relation of hiddenness in revelation. Thus, Wilhelm Pauck points out that Erich Seeberg tries to relate Luther's hidden God to "God who in His revelation hides himself in the means of revelation", not "an inscrutable and unknown Divine being *in se* [in himself]".¹¹ On the other hand, Brunner regards the God hidden behind revelation, that is, the *Deus absolutus*, as the hiddenness of God, while he thinks of the hiddenness in revelation just as "the veiling of God", not "the hiddenness of God". Thus his idea of the hidden God more focusses on Hiddenness II. He concludes that "the *Deus absconditus* is the really hidden God, He who is really not to be known in his true being, the *Deus absolutus*, the God of wrath."¹² Therefore, we need to have a balanced view of both Hiddenness I and Hiddenness II for a right understanding of the relation between God hidden and revealed. In Hiddenness I and Hiddenness II, we find some distinct and characteristic, though not separated, relations of God hidden and revealed. My argument will show the relations as follows: "identical" in Hiddenness I and "unity in contradiction: A *Divine paradox*" in Hiddenness II. In particular, along with the distinction between Hiddenness I and Hiddenness II, a *Divine paradox* is the main key to helping us to reach a unified view beyond the diverse understanding of the relation between God hidden and revealed.

In addition, as I noted above, the relation between God hidden and revealed has multifarious facets.¹³ First of all, one significant facet is the relation between God's love and wrath. Can we say that God's wrath in Luther is the real nature of God? Is it just a mask of God for God's love? The structure of God's love and wrath will reveal to us a certain aspect of the relation between God hidden and revealed. Along a similar spectrum, we will pursue the relation between law and gospel in God hidden and

¹¹ W. Pauck, "Review of Erich Seeberg", *Luthers Theologie*, vol. II, in *Church History*, vol. XX (1940), 200.

¹² Brunner, *Dogmatics*, vol. I, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 172.

¹³ As for these multifarious facets, see the introduction of the whole thesis and that of Part III.

revealed. Around the relation of law and gospel, there is some confusion because sometimes, God's law can be interpreted as the work of the hidden God, and sometimes as the work of the revealed God for gospel. This problem can be elucidated in the double structure of law and gospel seen in terms of God hidden and revealed. As for the relation between a God of love and a God of harsh predestination, I will claim that unlike the views of scholars such as Reinhold Seeberg, Max Weber, Ernst Troeltsch, and Randall Zachman, Luther's God is not only a God of love and forgiveness but also a God of predestination and judgement, who judges and damns people according to his inscrutable will. As a hot issue, here, we will explore the matter of "double predestination" in Luther, along with some historical investigation of Luther's works. Here the main question will be "Did Luther keep the idea of 'double predestination' as we see in Calvin?" and "If so, can we say he corrected his view on this in his later work?" As for the relation between the Holy Spirit and the hidden God, I will insist that Luther's doctrine of the hidden God does not destroy a traditional doctrine of Trinity, but they are in harmony. Finally, we will deal with how to get the knowledge of God hidden and revealed, and then the meaning of faith in the doctrine of the hidden God.

1. Two Streams of Scholastic Views on the Relation of God Hidden and Revealed

The diverse opinions of scholars on the relation between God hidden and revealed in Luther's thought show how complex it is to interpret Luther's teaching on the reality of God hidden and revealed, as we have seen in the introduction. Largely, scholars' views on the relation between God hidden and revealed are divided into two ways: first, it is identical; second, it is antithetical or contradictory.

To the first group, who insist on the identical relation between God hidden and revealed belong Ferdinand Kattenbusch, Karl Holl, Hellmut Bandt, and Erich Seeberg. According to Kattenbusch, the *Deus absconditus* and the *Deus revelatus* are identical, because, in a single event of revelation, the eye of faith discerns the *Deus revelatus*, where sense-perception can only find the *Deus absconditus*.¹⁴ Basically, he equates hiddenness with revelation. These two concepts are in direct connection and correlation. Revelation does not eliminate the hidden. Rather, hiddenness is due to revelation. In other words, revelation is the precondition of hiddenness.¹⁵ Hellmut Bandt is famous for his epigrammatic statement: "In the final analysis, there is no hiddenness of God for Luther other than the hidden form of his revelation."¹⁶ However, as Gerrish evaluates, Bandt depends more heavily on the passages such as WA 18.633.7ff (*The Bondage of the Will*) most congenial to his line of interpretation, rather than WA 18.685.28 which is hard for him assimilate because of the sure contradiction of God hidden and revealed.¹⁷ Karl Holl claims that God's hiddenness implies that what lies behind revelation is not caprice or arbitrariness, but can be trusted to the same extent as revelation even though one does not understand it. For instance, Holl understands that Luther wanted to put God's wrath and love on the same level. He finds unity between them, though God's wrath is located on the lower level.¹⁸ Erich Seeberg has the view that the hidden and the revealed are not two things beside each other, in which one is the background of the other, but that they are one in thought and nature.¹⁹

¹⁴ F. Kattenbusch, "*Deus absconditus bei Luther* " in *Festgabe für D. Dr. Julius Kaftan zu seinem 70. Geburtstag*, 170-214 (Tübingen: Verlag von J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1920), 204.

¹⁵ Ibid., 181-183.

¹⁶ Hellmut Bandt, *Luthers lehre vom verborgenen Gott* (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt Berlin, 1957), 94. "*Es gibt für Luther letzten Endes keine andere Vervorgenheit Gottes als die Vervorgenheitsgestalt seiner Offenbarung.*"

¹⁷ Gerrish, "'To the Unknown God': Luther and Calvin on the Hiddenness of God", 344. For example, the sure contradiction can be found in the statements such as "he does not will the death of a sinner, according to his word; but he wills it according to his inscrutable will of his" in *LW* 33.140. (*Bondage of the Will*)

¹⁸ Karl Holl, "Was Verstand Luther unter Religion?" in *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kirchengeschichte*, Band I (Tübingen: Mohr, 1923), 25ff.

¹⁹ Erich Seeberg, *Luthers Theologie: Motive und Ideen*, vol. I (Göttingen: Vandenhoe & Ruprecht, 1929), 206.

The second group, who give more attention to the *antithetical* or *contradictory* relation between Luther's God hidden and revealed, are represented by Otto Ritschl, Albrecht Ritschl, Adolf Harnack, Karl Barth, Brunner, Friedlich Loofs, B. A. Gerrish, McGrath, Paul Althaus, and Gerhard O. Forde,²⁰ Among these, some of whom we will discuss later,²¹ in his extreme view, Otto Ritschl relates Luther's concept of God to the heretical view of Marcion that there are two different Gods.²² Albrecht Ritschl, examining Luther's *Bondage of the Will*, finds that Luther has pushed the relation between God hidden and revealed in an undesirable direction. He understands that Luther's idea of the hidden God, expressed, for instance, in the phrase that what God wills is right because God so wills, makes God an arbitrary creature.²³ Typically, he comments that Luther holds two irreconcilable elements—the arbitrariness of God and God as love without any feeling of their contradiction.²⁴ Karl Barth's basic view is that Luther's hidden God is somehow wrong because it threatens to destroy God's unity.²⁵ In this view, he comments that "it cannot be denied that Luther sometimes spoke of his *Deus absconditus* as if he understood by this concept a *potentia absoluta* or even more a *potentia inordinata*."²⁶ Furthermore, he expresses a strong doubt about the real identity between Luther's *Deus revelatus* and *Deus absconditus*:

²⁰ There is a wide time span of these comments. Gerrish and McGrath are comparatively modern. Especially, McGrath suggests the double aspect of the relation between God hidden and revealed (*identical* in Hiddenness I and *antithetical* in Hiddenness II). Among these scholars, Gerrish, McGrath, Althaus, and Forde will be discussed in this chapter, 3. "The Relation between the Hidden God and the Revealed God", especially b. "Unity in Contradiction": A *Divine Paradox* in Hiddenness II." Cf. Gerrish, "God hidden and revealed"; McGrath, *Theology of the Cross*, Chapter 5; Dillenberger, *God Hidden and Revealed*, Chapters. 1-3 and Walther von Loewenich, *Theology of the Cross*, Chapter 5.

²¹ We will discuss Barth, Brunner, Gerrish, McGrath, Althaus, and Forde in the below Chapter V.3. "The Relation between the Hidden God and the Revealed God"; 4. "God's Love and Wrath in God Hidden and Revealed".

²² Otto Ritschl, *Dogmengeschichte des Protestantismus; Grundlagen und Grundzügen der Theologischen Gedanken und Lehrbildung in der Protestantischen Kirche* 4 vols. (vols. 1-2, Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1908-12; vols. 3-4, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1926-27), 3:16.

²³ Albrecht Ritschl, *Geschichtliche Studien zur Christlichen Lehre von Gott in Gesammelte Aufsätze* (Neue Folge, Freiburg i. B.: J.C.B. Mohr, 1896), 77-85.

²⁴ Albrecht Ritschl, *A Critical History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1902), 201.

²⁵ Tracy and Lohse summed up Barth's view in this way. Cf. Tracy, "The Hidden God: The Divine Other of Liberation", 12; Bernhard Lohse, *Martin Luther: An Introduction to His Life and Work* (Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark, 1980), 228.

For how can we do this genuinely and seriously if all the time, as in Luther's teaching about the Law, there is not denied but asserted a very different existence of God as the *Deus absconditus*, a very real *potentia inordinata* in the background? Is the correct reference to the *Deus revelatus* adequate if it is not quite certain that this *Deus revelatus* as such is also the *Deus absconditus*, and in all His possibilities, all His capacity in the regions and dimensions inaccessible to us, the *Deus absconditus* is none other than the *Deus revelatus*?²⁷

More resolutely, Friedrich Loofs avers that the *Deus absconditus* is the necessary background to the deterministic view of predestination.²⁸ He repudiates Luther's idea of the hidden God as a medieval remnant. He argues that Luther fails to solve the discrepancy between the hidden will and the revealed will.²⁹

Keeping these diverse opinions in mind, we will pursue the proper relation of God hidden and revealed, based on Luther's works. I expect that several tools such as distinction between Hiddenness I and Hiddenness II, the *Divine paradox*, and three different lights of nature, faith, and glory will be effective in providing more a synthetic and comprehensive view beyond the conflicts of these diverse opinions.

2. Hiddenness I and Hiddenness II

How does Luther distinguish Hiddenness I and Hiddenness II and what is the relation between them? In *The Bondage of the Will*, we find a significant passage which suggests the relation of Hiddenness I and Hiddenness II:

(1) Faith has to do with things not seen [Heb. 11:11]. Hence in order that there may be room for faith, it is necessary that everything which is believed should be hidden. (2) It cannot, however, be more deeply hidden than under an object, perception, or experience which is contrary to it. Thus when God makes alive he does it by killing, when he

²⁶ Karl Barth, *CD*, II/1 (Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark, 1964), 541.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 542.

²⁸ Friedrich Loofs, *Leitfaden zum studien der Dogmengeschichte*, 760-763.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 769.

justifies he does it by making men guilty, when he exalts to heaven, he does it by bringing down to hell, as Scripture says: "The Lord kills and brings to life; he brings down to Sheol and raises up" (1 Sam. 2:6)... (3) Thus *God hides his eternal goodness and mercy under eternal wrath, his righteousness under apparent iniquity*. (4) This is the highest degree of faith, to believe him merciful when he saves so few and damns so many, and to believe him righteous when by his own will he makes us necessarily damnable, so that he seems, according to Erasmus, to delight in the torments of the wretched and to be worthy of hatred rather than of love. If, then, I could by any means comprehend how this God can be merciful and just who displays *the appearance of* so much wrath and iniquity, there would be no need of faith.³⁰

It is helpful to divide this passage into four parts. The first part speaks of faith. Here the purpose of hiddenness is to bring people to faith. The theme of faith governs the remaining three parts. Faith is the key to understanding the rest. The second part describes the paradoxical way God works under the contrary forms: "Thus when God makes alive he does it by killing, when he justifies he does it by making men guilty, when he exalts to heaven, he does it by bringing down to hell..." This is the way God hidden in revelation works, the God of Hiddenness I. However, in the same context, and in continuity with the second part, the fourth part of the passage speaks of Hiddenness II. The third part makes a connection between Hiddenness I and Hiddenness II: *God hides his eternal goodness and mercy under eternal wrath, his righteousness under apparent iniquity*. This idea reflects the basic principle of Hiddenness I, because it describes the typical way God works in paradox. Luther, however, attached a significant epithet, "eternal", and thus pushed Hiddenness I into extremity, so that the story changes. "Eternal wrath" implies God's eternal punishment of the damned in perdition. This is the main idea of the predestinating and judging God—Hiddenness II. Because the wrath of Hiddenness I aims at the salvation of the sinners, eternal wrath cannot be an aspect of God hidden in Christ. In the fourth part of the passage, Luther describes the God in

³⁰ LW 33.62-63. (*Bondage of the Will*). Here the numbers are mine.

Hiddenness II “who saves so few and damns so many.” While the revealed God is a God of eternal mercy, the hidden God is the God “who saves so few and damns so many” and shows the eternal wrath to the damned. As we have seen, eternal wrath cannot be an attribute of Hiddenness I, but only of Hiddenness II. Briefly speaking, the third of the passage that *God hides his eternal goodness and mercy under eternal wrath, his righteousness under apparent iniquity* is originally the extreme extension of Hiddenness I, but it jumps over the limit of Hiddenness I to the area of Hiddenness II. More fundamentally speaking, the paradoxical way God works under the contrary forms provides the correspondence between Hiddenness I and Hiddenness II. The phrase “*his righteousness under apparent iniquity*” plays the role of the effective connecting bond between Hiddenness I and Hiddenness II: this idea overlaps in both as a common principle. Consider the case of Hiddenness I. The sinless Christ died on the Cross as the greatest criminal. Righteousness was concealed beneath apparent injustice. How is it in the case of Hiddenness II? While the revealed God is just, the hidden God beyond revelation is the God who according to his own will makes us necessarily damnable, that he may seem, as Erasmus says, “to delight in the torments of the miserable, and to be an object of hatred rather than of love.” It seems that the hidden God beyond revelation is a God of injustice. However, Luther does not say that the God of Hiddenness II is really the God of injustice. First, it is because Luther uses non-factual expressions such as “seems” (so that he *seems*, according to Erasmus, to delight in the torments of the wretched and to be worthy of hatred rather than of love) or the “appearance” (the *appearance* of so much wrath and iniquity). This implies that wrath and injustice is just appearance, not a fact. What kind of theological effect does Luther intend to get from this extension of Hiddenness I into the realm of Hiddenness II on the common principle

which overlaps in both? He extends the paradoxical truth from Hiddenness I to Hiddenness II in a continuous stream to prove that both Hiddenness I and Hiddenness II are based on the same paradoxical truth. This clearly shows that they are closely related. More than anything else, the unity between Hiddenness I and Hiddenness II is strongly supported by the unity between God hidden and revealed on the ground that they are one and the same God on Christological perspective. However we should not stay here. In spite of this inseparable relation between Hiddenness I and Hiddenness II, we should recognize that there are undeniable distinctions between them in several points. First, God's intention in Hiddenness I and that in Hiddenness II are different. While Hiddenness I has the intention to reveal God, Hiddenness II has no such intention to reveal Godself to us. Hiddenness II is such area as God really wanted to hide in history. Second, God has a different purpose behind his wrath. In Hiddenness I, God shows his wrath to correct us so that we become humbled and find the revealed love and grace. However, in Hiddenness II, God's wrath has no intention of correction for love. God just pours his wrath to the sinners as eternal judgement, which drives them into eternal perdition. What is shining and overpowering in Hiddenness II is not God's mercy, but God's justice. Third, our faith shows different function between Hiddenness I and Hiddenness II. In Hiddenness I, faith penetrates the mask of God and finds the God hidden under the mask. However, in Hiddenness II, faith cannot play the role of the tool for penetrating the mystery of the hidden will any more, but is a tool to lead us to trust in God in spite of God's unfathomable and mysterious way beyond us: "If faith lingers too long, tries to penetrate the mystery of the hidden will, it can only lose itself in the abyss of the unknown God."³¹ Therefore, we can say Hiddenness I and Hiddenness II are *inseparable, yet distinct*, in that the idea of Hiddenness II is related to the extreme

³¹ Gerrish, "To the Unknown God": Luther and Calvin on the Hiddenness of God", 140.

extension of Hiddenness I and that both of them are based on the paradoxical way God hidden and revealed works, but that they have a distinct Divine intention and purpose and different functions of faith and the Holy Spirit.

From the historical perspective, we notice some transition of Luther's attitude towards the concept of Hiddenness I and Hiddenness II in his theological development.³² Historically, we can read Luther's change of the emphasis on God's hiddenness. First of all, Luther's early thought in the *Heidelberg Disputation* (1518) focusses on Hiddenness I, where God is hidden in his revelation and he reveals himself to us not directly but paradoxically in the Cross and suffering. However, in *The Bondage of the Will*, Luther speaks of Hiddenness II. McGrath too states that "the notion of a hidden and inscrutable God, who predestines men to death without cause, looms large in the 1525 treatise *de servo arbitrio*."³³ In this hiddenness resides "God himself" surrounded by the incomprehensible mystery that "forms the background of his almighty double-willing and double-working of salvation and damnation."³⁴ While Paul Althaus takes notice of the sharp contrast between these two lines of hiddenness, Loewenich finds some harmony by claiming that the mysteries of Hiddenness II are what remain in spite of revelation.

The difference between the two lines can be put together in his way: in the first instance, the notion of the *Deus absconditus* signifies that revelation is principally possible in veiling; in the second instance, that also in the revelation of God, mysteries remain. Both lines are to be seen in the context of faith.³⁵

³² I slightly mentioned the historical perspective on Luther's Hiddenness I and Hiddenness II in Chapter I.2. "Development of the Hidden God in Luther's Theology and His Work".

³³ McGrath, *Luther's Theology of the Cross*, 172.

³⁴ Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, 277.

³⁵ Loewenich, *Luther's Theology of the Cross*, 37.

Lowenich's understanding can be defined as "deep mystery under the veiling". If we borrow Gerrish's term, this can be "Hiddenness II behind the veil of Hiddenness I". Historically, Luther takes this compromise position, in his *Lectures on Genesis* (1539), where he tries to combine in harmony two elements stressed in the *Heidelberg Disputation* (1518) and *The Bondage of the Will* (1525). Here, Luther does not reject his notion of the hidden God apart from Christ by recalling to mind his teaching in *The Bondage of the Will* (1525) that human beings are not to be concerned with the hidden God, but rather with the revealed God. In his *Lectures on Genesis*, Luther tries to demonstrate a sort of unity by saying, "Whosoever loses Christ, who is revealed God, also loses the hidden God who is not revealed."³⁶

2. The Relation between the Hidden God and the Revealed God

Any effort to pursue the relation between God hidden and revealed without distinguishing Hiddenness I and Hiddenness II will bring about some confusion. Hiddenness I and Hiddenness II are not separate, but distinct lines of thought. Gerrish emphasises the distinctive relations respectively in Hiddenness I and Hiddenness II as follows: "It is a single act by which God slays and makes alive in the justification of the sinner, whereas the antithesis between eternal wrath and eternal mercy refers to two different Divine acts or series of acts directed to two different objects."³⁷ This must be the remarkable insight which convinces us of the necessity to demonstrate the relation between God hidden and revealed not only in Hiddenness I, but also in Hiddenness II. In the dual aspect of Hiddenness I and Hiddenness II, we will trace the reality of the

³⁶ LW 5.46. (Gen 26:9)

³⁷ Gerrish, *The Old Protestantism and the New*, 345,

relation in Luther's God hidden and revealed in a more comprehensive ways: first in Hiddenness I, and then in Hidden II.

a. "Identical" in Hiddenness I

What is the relation for Luther between the hidden God and the revealed God in Hiddenness I? The decisive clue for this can be found in a sermon delivered on 24 February 1517, in which Luther remarked, "Man hides his own things, in order to conceal them; God hides his own things, in order to reveal them."³⁸ According to B. A. Gerrish, Hiddenness I means that God is hidden in revelation. In the *Heidelberg Disputation* of 1518, this concept is well represented. Here, God is not only hidden but also revealed in the Cross and in suffering.

To understand the relation more correctly, we should think about the relation of God's wrath and mercy, weakness and strength, and folly and mercy. To reason, God looks wrathful, but to the eye of faith, God's mercy is revealed in this wrath. Evidently what is revealed is God's mercy because only faith can see the revealed God and what faith discerns is mercy. In one single event of revelation in the Cross, God's wrath and mercy are revealed simultaneously. Only faith can discern the merciful intention which underlies the revealed wrath. The revelation of God in the Cross lies *abscondita sub contrario*, so that God's strength is revealed under apparent weakness, and his wisdom under apparent folly. At the same time, God who works in a paradoxical way of *abscondita sub contrario* hides his strength under apparent weakness; his wisdom under apparent folly; his *opus proprium* under his *opus alienum*; the future glory of the Christian under the present sufferings. Therefore, God's mercy, strength, and wisdom are

³⁸ WA 1.138.13-15. (*Resolutiones disputationum de indulgentiarum virtute*, 1518): "Theologus crucis (est de deo crucifixo et abscondito loquens)..."

not only *hidden but also revealed* under apparent wrath, weakness, and folly. Here, we can be sure that both what is revealed and what is hidden refer to the same things—God’s mercy, God’s strength, and God’s wisdom. After all, what is revealed (to our faith) refers to the same things with what is hidden (to our reason). The revealed God is none other than the hidden God. The God who is revealed to our faith is hidden to our sense perception. While God approaches the eye of faith as the *Deus revelatus*, God just remains the *Deus absconditus* to those only with sense perception. Revelation becomes revelation only to the eye of faith, but it remains hidden to the eye of the world. Therefore, this double aspect of revelation makes it possible to conclude that the hidden God and the revealed God are identical. The God in Hiddenness I is none other than God in the mask. This God undergoes no change but stays just the same. What is changed is our perception, which perceives in a different way. Faith penetrates the mask of God and looks into the God in the mask. However, human reason cannot penetrate the mask of God but just stays on the mask. Because of this different perception, the same God proves to be the *Deus revelatus* to the eye of faith, and the same God remains to be the *Deus absconditus* to sense perception. Erich Seeberg rightly interprets this relation between the hidden and revealed God by saying, “The hidden and the revealed are not two things beside each other, in which one is the background of the other, but that they are one in thought and nature.”³⁹ McGrath properly says, “Both the *Deus absconditus* and the *Deus revelatus* are to be found in precisely the same event of revelation: which of the two is recognized depends upon the perceiver.”⁴⁰

To summarize Luther’s views, in Hiddenness I, the hidden God and the revealed God are identical, indicating same referent. The difference lies only in the perceiver’s eye. In this context we can agree with Bandt’s remark that “in the final analysis, there is

³⁹ Erich Seeberg, *Luthers Theologie*, vol. I. 206.

⁴⁰ McGrath, *Luther’s Theology of the Cross*, 165.

no hiddenness of God for Luther other than the hidden form of his revelation” or Emil Brunner’s statement that Luther’s “revealed” God is simultaneously “veiled”, but not strictly “hidden”.⁴¹

b. ‘Unity in Contradiction’: A *Divine Paradox* in Hiddenness II

In this section, we are going to attempt to pursue the relation for Luther between the hidden God beyond revelation (Hiddenness II) and the revealed God. Luther’s Hiddenness II is well represented in *The Bondage of the Will*. In Hiddenness II the hiddenness is not due to the perceiver’s sight—whether s/he has the eye of belief or not. It refers to God’s hiddenness behind and beyond revelation. It relates to the mystery which forms the background of God’s almighty double-willing and double-working of salvation and damnation. In Hiddenness II, the relation between the hidden and the revealed God is more complex and ambiguous than in the case of Hiddenness I, because a serious antithesis and unity coexist, creating a paradoxical tension. We should understand the relation in terms of a *Divine paradox*, not human paradox.

First of all, we find a serious apparent *antithesis* between God who is known through his self-revelation and God who is hidden beyond revelation. Luther is forced to concede that behind the merciful God, who is revealed in the Cross of Christ, there may well be a hidden God whose intentions are diametrically opposite. It is clear that some of Luther’s statements on God hidden and revealed show a complete antithesis clashing in itself. The most famous passages are as follows:

God does many things that he does not disclose to us in his Word; he also wills many things which he does not disclose himself as willing in his Word. Thus he does not will

⁴¹ Brunner, *Dogmatics*, vol. I, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 168ff.

the death of a sinner, according to his Word; but he wills according to that inscrutable will of his...⁴²

It is likewise the part of this incarnate God to weep, wail, and groan over the perdition of the ungodly, when the will of the Divine Majesty purposely abandons and reprobates some to perish.⁴³

Several points to an antithetical disparity in God himself: (1) God wills many things that he does not show us in his Word. (2) He does not will the death of a sinner—in his Word, but he does will it by that inscrutable will. (3) The *Deus incarnatus* must find himself reduced to tears as he sees the *Deus absconditus* consigning men to perdition. These contradictory elements provide some room for many critics to claim that, logically, there is a real contradiction in Luther's description of God hidden and revealed.⁴⁴ The essence of their arguments can be summarized into the matter of bifurcation of two wills, which is deeply related to a series of inexplicable riddles surrounding these questions Luther asked: How can the God who saves so few and damns so many be merciful and just? How can we believe that God is righteous when by his own will he makes us necessarily damnable, so that he seems to delight in the torments of the wretched and to be worthy of hatred rather than of love?⁴⁵ Above all, the question asked by people feeling the bifurcation of the two wills is "Even though I believe in Christ, who knows whether the Father is gracious to me?"⁴⁶ On this matter, Gerrish claims that in Luther "the two wills fall apart in a bifurcation that he does not profess himself able to overcome."⁴⁷ Gerrish indicates that the discrepancy between Luther's assurance that we have the Father's will in Christ and Luther's counsel that we

⁴² LW 33.140. (*Bondage of the Will*)

⁴³ LW 33.146. (*Bondage of the Will*)

⁴⁴ Gerrish, McGrath, Barth, Ritschl, Althaus, Forde feel a serious contradiction here.

⁴⁵ LW 33.62-3;190. (*Bondage of the Will*)

⁴⁶ LW 24.157. (John 14:23)

⁴⁷ Gerrish, "To the Unknown God": Luther and Calvin on the Hiddenness of God", 137.

should flee from the hidden God to the God in the manger or contemplate the wounds of Jesus, does not solve the theological problem, and Luther does not pretend that they do.⁴⁸ Therefore, Gerrish concludes that Luther's argument ends up jeopardizing his own theological starting point that God's revelation in Christ is the only secure basis for knowledge of God's gracious will. McGrath likewise believes that Luther's doctrine of God appears to have reached an impasse: the hidden and inscrutable will of God may stand in contradiction to his revealed will.⁴⁹ Referring to Luther's answer to Erasmus' statement that God does not desire the death of the sinner—by arguing that while this may be true of the revealed God, it is not necessarily true of the hidden God—McGrath insists that Luther's argument risks making theology irrelevant because statements which can be made on the basis of Divine revelation may be refuted by appealing to a hidden and inscrutable God, whose will probably contradicts that of the revealed God.⁵⁰ In addition, Paul Althaus recognizes that there is an immeasurable danger to human trust in the Word of promise when Luther asserts in *The Bondage of the Will* that God has not limited himself in his Word and demands that we distinguish "God himself" from the God who is revealed in his Word. Althaus sharply asks, "How can the man who hears that still, without reservation, trust in the Word which offers him God's mercy?"⁵¹ Barth, too, insists that in Luther's thought it is not clear that the *Deus absconditus* is really the *Deus revelatus*. Barth does not think that Luther overcomes the difficulty of late scholasticism because Luther states that man ought not concern himself with the *Deus absconditus*, that is, with the will of God apart from his will from revelation, but look only to the *Deus revelatus*. Barth evaluates that this still leaves the will of God and the will to salvation uncertain. Albrecht Ritschl thinks of the arbitrariness of God and God

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ McGrath, *Luther's Theology of the Cross*, 166.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 167.

⁵¹ Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, 278.

as love as two irreconcilable elements that Luther held side by side without sensing their contradictory nature.⁵² More extremely, Forde goes so far as to describe this antithetical relation culminating in a “battle” between the *Deus absconditus* and the *Deus revelatus*, between God not preached and the preached God, and between the naked God and the clothed God. According to him, “The *Deus nudus*, the *Deus absconditus*, the God of wrath, has virtually to be overcome by the ‘clothed’, the revealed God of mercy in Jesus Christ.”⁵³ Here, the word, “overcome” suggests the antithetical relation, and it is developed into “battle” in his another statement: “God not preached devours sinners without regret, but the preached God battles to snatch us away from the sin and death.”⁵⁴ Forde’s more elaborate discussion follows:

It is God against God. The abstract God cannot be removed but must be dethroned, overcome, “for you” in concrete actuality. The clothed God must conquer the naked God for you in the living present. Faith is precisely the ever-renewed flight from God to God: from naked and hidden to the God clothed and revealed. Luther insists that we cling to the God at his mother’s breasts, the God who hung on the Cross and was raised to the tomb in the face of the dangerous attack launched from the side of the hidden God...There is just no other way. The question at stake is whether one will believe God in the face of God.⁵⁵

We cannot deny that a lot of Luther’s contradictory statements as to God hidden and revealed and these scholars’ views discussed above show us some antithetical aspect between God hidden and revealed.

However, we should not stay just on this. We should remind ourselves at the same time that in spite of these antithetical aspects of God hidden and revealed, Luther makes

⁵² Ritschl, *A Critical History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation*, 201.

⁵³ Forde, “Reconciliation with God”, in *Christian Dogmatics*, 71.

⁵⁴ Forde, *Theology is for Proclamation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 27. I estimate that Forde’s extreme view of the “battle” between the hidden God and the revealed God went too far beyond what Luther intended to. The paradoxical tension between them does not have to be elevated into the “battle.”

⁵⁵ Forde, *Theology is for Proclamation*, 22.

a continuous and strong effort to demonstrate God's unity. Above all, Luther regards our perception of God's different wills as the devil's trap. Luther thinks that there is a temptation to make us believe in another will of God's like that of a liar or a devil which we cannot understand at all.⁵⁶ Because, in our reason, the hidden God looks completely different from the God revealed, the hidden God frightens us and makes us tremble with more terrible fear than the devil can induce in us. When our nature feels God's anger and punishment, there is no other way but to view God as an "angry tyrant" or "enemy".⁵⁷ What is worse, the hidden God looks like a liar. It seems that he has two different wills. However, Luther insists that it is just temptation, not the truth. Luther adamantly opposed and condemned any idea of bifurcation of two wills in God. We can enumerate Luther's efforts to demonstrate God's unity in several ways.

First, Luther clearly emphasises once again that it is totally the devil's work to "separate Christ from the Father",⁵⁸ and to "struggle to prevent the heart from joining Christ and the Father so closely and solidly that it certainly concludes that Christ's Word and the Father's Word are one and the same word, heart, and will."⁵⁹ Luther describes this attempt as "Devil's dart with which to gain mastery over us than the picture of an unmerciful and angry God."⁶⁰ This is a very formidable attack because no one is staunch enough to bear it when that shot hits the heart. Paul Althaus goes so far as to say that it is the strategy of the devil who "wants to snatch men away from the true God to allow men to honor and love the man Jesus, and relate to him in their piety, in 'Jesus mysticism,' without looking for and finding the Father in him"⁶¹ Luther appeals to Christ because this strategy of the devil is against the efforts of Christ who "always

⁵⁶ LW 14.31. (Psalm 117: the instruction)

⁵⁷ LW 19.72. (Jonah 2:2)

⁵⁸ LW 24.157. (John 14:23)

⁵⁹ WA 21.467, quoted in Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, 189.

⁶⁰ LW 24.157. (John 14:23)

⁶¹ Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, 190.

draws us up to the Father with diligence”⁶² In his *Sermons on the Gospel of St. John*, Luther describes Jesus as the one who always contends against the “Devil’s dart” which erases the image of the merciful God from our heart and fills it with that of an unmerciful and angry Father. Jesus “arms us with the weapons of defense by reassuring us that He Himself vouches for the Father’s love.”⁶³ Therefore, Luther completely rejects this dubious idea of God’s different two wills: “Even though I believe in Christ, who knows whether the Father is gracious to me?” He reaffirms the unity between the two wills:

If we believe in Him and are in His love, there is no longer any anger in heaven or on earth; there is nothing but fatherly love and all goodness. God, together with all the angels, smiles on and keeps watch over us as His dear children. So thoroughly does God sweep all fear and terror from heaven and fill it with sheer assurance and joy if the heart but remains with Christ and holds to Him.⁶⁴

Luther’s idea of God’s unity is anchored to the fortress of Christology. Luther’s Christological perspective is firm in relation to the hidden God. Even in *The Bondage of the Will* where he expresses the most contradictory aspects between God hidden and revealed, thus inviting sharp criticism from modern experts, we find Luther keeping to the Christological perspective, “For neither do we teach anything but crucified...For there is no other wisdom to be taught among Christians, than that which is ‘hidden in a mystery.’”⁶⁵

Christological perspective makes Luther confess that Christ is “the mirror of God’s fatherly heart, in whom God himself appears to us.”⁶⁶ Besides, Luther concedes in his

⁶² LW 24.157. (John 14:23)

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Martin Luther, *The Bondage of the Will*, trans. Henry Cole (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1931), 80.

⁶⁶ WA 31.192. (Psalm 82, 1530)

Commentary on John that “in Christ I have the Father’s will and heart.”⁶⁷ Luther regards Christ alone as “the means, the life, and the mirror through which we see God and know His will.”⁶⁸ Through the mirror of Christ, we can “peer into the depths of the fatherly heart, yes, into the inexhaustible goodness and eternal love of God which he feels and has felt toward us from eternity.”⁶⁹ Everything Christ thinks, says, and wants reflects the will of the Father.⁷⁰ In his sermon for Palm Sunday on Philippians 2:5 ff., Luther explains that Christ emptied and humbled himself to obey the Father and therefore the way was cleared for us to look into the depths of the Divine Majesty and see the gracious will and love of his fatherly heart for us.⁷¹ On the Cross, he descended as the love of God into the hopeless and forsaken world of suffering, and by his death he proved the immeasurable and ineffable love of God and his agony for our sin. In his desperate prayer in Gethsemane and of Golgotha saying, “Not my will, but Thine...” “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!” Christ showed the love of sacrifice and grace of forgiveness. “All that Christ does and suffers was ordained by the Father’s goodwill”, reassuring us of God as love.⁷² Therefore, Jesus Christ, the Incarnate God in the “bosom of the Father”, has unveiled the eternal “heart of the Father”.⁷³ He became the personified heart of God—the perfect “mirror” to reveal Father’s heart. Luther declares, “God is to be known alone in Christ.”⁷⁴

Besides, based on Luther’s Christological view, Luther regards Christ as the “ladder” to bring us to the hidden God.

⁶⁷ *WA* 45.589. = *LW* 24.141. (John 14:20)

⁶⁸ *LW* 26.396. (Gal 4:8, 9)

⁶⁹ *WA* 20.228 (*Predigten des Jahres 1526: Sermon aus dem 3 Kapitel Matthai von der Taufe Christi*)

⁷⁰ *WA* 45.589 = *LW* 24.141 (John 14:20)

⁷¹ *WA* 17^{II}.244 (*Epistel auf den Sonntag Palmarum*, Phil. 2:5-12)

⁷² *WA* 21.477.24. (John 14:30) Cf. *LW* 24.191. (John 14:30); Sermons III.296,

⁷³ See *WA* 42.11 = *LW* 1.13 (Gen 1:2, 1539); *WA* 2.140 = *LW* 42.13 (Meditation on Christ’s Passion, 1519); *WA* 40^I.77 = *LW* 26.29 (Gal 1:3).

⁷⁴ *WA* 10^{II}.277.18-292. (*Vom ehelichen Leben*, 1522)

We are to ascend into heaven by that ladder which is placed before us, using those steps which God prepared and used for this ascent. The Son of God does not want to be seen and found in heaven. Therefore, he descended from heaven to this earth and came to us in our flesh. He placed himself in the womb of his mother, in her lap, and on the Cross. And this is the ladder which he has placed on the earth and by which we are to ascend to God.”⁷⁵

Christ’s humanity is “the holy ladder” (*scala sancta*) to his Divinity. All ascent to know God is dangerous except the one through Christ’s humanity, for that is the ladder of Jacob, by which one has to ascend.”⁷⁶ In his Word, God has lifted the corner of his veil, taking a step out of his hiddenness: “Begin from below, from the incarnate Son...Christ will bring you to the hidden God...If you take the revealed God, he will bring you the hidden God at the same time.”⁷⁷ We are “drawn and carried directly to the Father...only by taking hold of Christ, who, by the will of the Father, has given himself in death for our sins.”⁷⁸ These all show that there is no other way to lead us to the hidden God except the revealed God, Christ.⁷⁹

Along with his Christological perspective, Luther relies on his view of God to support the unity of God. First of all, Luther defines the relation between the hidden God and the revealed God as inseparable oneness. That is, their relation is not just “through” or “to”, but “is” or “same”. Luther declared in his later *Lectures on Genesis*, “Whosoever loses Christ, who is revealed God, also loses the hidden God who is not revealed.”⁸⁰ And vice versa: if we have the revealed God in Christ, then it means that

⁷⁵ WA 40^{III}.656. (*Enarratio capituli noni Esaiæ*, 9:6)

⁷⁶ WA 20.778.1-3 (1 John 5:6)

⁷⁷ WA TR 5, no. 5658a: 294.24.34; 295.5; 294.4, quoted in Gerrish “‘To the Unknown God’: Luther and Calvin on the Hiddenness of God”, 140. Cf. LW 5.46. (Gen 26:9)

⁷⁸ LW 26.42. (Gal 1:4)

⁷⁹ LW 26.29. (Gal 1:3): “Outside Christ, the Way, therefore, you will find no other way to the Father; you will find only wandering, not truth, but hypocrisy and lies, not life, but eternal death.”

⁸⁰ LW 5.46. (Gen 26:9)

we also have the hidden God together with Him.⁸¹ We can take hold of the hidden God, when we “look at Him as He lies in the manger and on the lap of His mother, as He hangs on the Cross.”⁸² God the Father is present in the humanity of Jesus Christ. “There is no other God apart from this Christ who has become our light and sun...He and no one else is the true God.”⁸³ In his *Lectures on Genesis* 26:9, Luther clearly affirms this identity of God hidden and God revealed in a stronger way.

I will be made flesh, or send my Son. He shall die for your sin and shall rise again from the dead...Behold, this is my Son; listen to Him (Cf. Matt. 17:5). Look at Him as He lies in the manger and on the lap of His mother, as He hangs on the Cross. Observe what He does and what He says. There you surely take hold of Me.⁸⁴

Besides, Luther’s favorite metaphor of “face and back” strongly supports and emphasises the solid unity of God hidden and revealed. In his *First Lectures on the Psalms*, Luther states:

In the same way also the face of God is His recognition and His good will toward us, while His back is anger against us and ignorance of us before Him. So He says through Jeremiah (Jer. 18:17): “I will show them My back and not My face.” And in Matt. 25:12, “Truly I say to you, I do not know you.” For people usually turn their face away and show their back and, as it were, refuse to acknowledge those who are angry, and, on the contrary, show their face and acknowledge those who love them and are favorable to them.⁸⁵

Here, the hidden God who shows his back of eternal wrath to the damned and the revealed God who shows his face of eternal love are in essence not a different God, but

⁸¹ LW 5.48. (Gen 26:9)

⁸² LW 5.44-45. (Gen 26:9)

⁸³ WA 31¹.63 (*Scholien zum Psalm* 118)

⁸⁴ LW 5.45. (Gen 26:9)

⁸⁵ LW 10.126. (Psalm 27:9)

one and the same. They are two different aspects of the same God, like face and back.

What is to be newly noticed for the unity of God in Luther is that the hidden God shares the same “I-consciousness” with the revealed God. In his *Lectures on Genesis*, Luther says, “From an unrevealed God *I* will become a revealed God. Nevertheless, *I* will remain the same God.”⁸⁶ Here we should pay careful attention to Luther’s use of “I” when referring to the hidden God and the revealed God. We notice that, though there is a transition from the hidden God to the revealed God, in spite of this transition, we find the continuity of “I-consciousness”, keeping the same identity between God hidden and revealed since the revealed God as well as the unrevealed God is referred to as “I”. This indicates that there is no separate consciousness between the hidden God and the revealed God, which provides the strong foundation for the unity of God hidden and revealed.

Finally, we should indicate the *perichoretic unity*. In her book, *God for Us*, Catherine LaCugna spotlights the concept of *perichoresis*, which means “being-in-one-another, permeation without confusion” as a way to provide a dynamic model of persons in communication based on mutuality and interdependence. This model provides a very significant insight for the understanding of the relationships not only among the persons of Trinity and but also between the God hidden and revealed because Luther describes Christ as the revealed God and Father as the hidden God. Whether Latin or Greek, the Divine unity has been based on a formula that the source or originator is hierarchically higher. However, the model of *perichoresis* shows a different picture of the Divine unity. In this model, Father and Son are interdependent, mutually communicating, and continuously cooperating, though one is the originator of another or the others. Moltmann understands that *perichoresis* means a unity of the mutual indwelling of the

⁸⁶ LW 5.44-45. (Gen 26:9)

Father in the Son and the Son in the Father, and of the Spirit in the Father and the Son.⁸⁷ This intimate indwelling and complete permeation in one another are expressed by Trinitarian *perichoresis*. Especially, Moltmann explains God's suffering in terms of this *perichoretic* unity: "By virtue of this mutual indwelling, Jesus' sufferings are Divine sufferings."⁸⁸ For Luther, this concept of *perichoresis*, though not fully developed as in Moltmann, plays the significant role of the Divine unity, especially between God hidden and revealed, represented by Son on earth and Father in heaven. First of all, Luther grasps the concept of *perichoretic* relation ("I live in the Father and the Father in Me") as a "link" or a "circle" of the "union and communion"⁸⁹ Luther describes the relation as "closely united".⁹⁰ Above all, this *perichoretic* relation establishes the basis for the unity between God hidden and revealed.

The first and foremost point about Christ's being in the Father is this, that we do not doubt that everything this Man says and does stands and must stand in heaven before all the angels, in the world before all tyrants, in hell before all devils, in the heart before every evil conscience and one's own thoughts. For if we are sure that everything He thinks, says, and wants reflects the will of the Father. I am able to defy anyone who would be wroth and angry with me. *In Christ I have the Father's will and heart...* In brief, if you comprehend and see this, then you comprehend and see Christ in the Father and the Father in Christ.⁹¹

On the basis of this *perichoretic* relation, Luther advises us to come and find Christ first if we are to find God: "Be it known to you that I am in the Father and that the Father is in Me. This is the real issue: If anyone wants to find the Father and come to

⁸⁷ Jürgen Moltmann, "The Unity of the Triune God" in the *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 28 (Number 1, 1984), 166.

⁸⁸ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ* (New York: Harper Sanfrancisco, 1989), 177.

⁸⁹ LW 24.139. (John 14:20) Cf. According to Dr. Susan Hardman Moore in Edinburgh University, Luther's understanding of the "*communicatio idiomatum*" underlies his Christology and Eucharistic theology.

⁹⁰ LW 24.137. (John 14:20)

⁹¹ LW 24.141. (John 14:20)

Him, he must first find Me and come to Me.”⁹²

Toward the end of his life after going through the tunnel of toilsome meditation and pains concerning the problem of the unity between the God hidden and God revealed, with special regard to predestination and Christ, Luther in his *Lectures on Genesis* clearly professes that the revealed God and hidden God of predestination (Hiddenness II) are not different Gods, but one and the same God.

I will reveal My foreknowledge and predestination to you in an extraordinary manner, but not by this way of reason and carnal wisdom, as you imagine. This is how I will do so: From an unrevealed God I will become a revealed God. Nevertheless, I will remain *the same God*.⁹³

So far we have seen that in Luther’s theology, there is not only a contradiction but also a strong unity between God hidden and revealed. The coexistence of antithetical discrepancy and unity creates *another level of contradiction* in that they cannot be harmonized. However, Luther’s intention is far from contradiction. Can they be harmonized at all? If so, how? This question can be answered in a paradoxical tension calling for a different level of perception. This view could perhaps best be expressed as “unity in contradiction”. Luther’s typical perspective is that even a great emphasis on the unity does not alleviate the apparent contradiction. The task left for us to do is to find ways in which Luther tries to suggest how contradiction and unity can coexist between God hidden and revealed. Peter Vardy indicates that Luther recognizes this tension between the hidden God and the revealed God, but refuses to compromise either of the two views in order to overcome it.⁹⁴ Luther’s thought is rooted in a paradox. The paradox is the key to understanding God hidden and revealed: contradiction at one level

⁹² LW 24.139. (John 14:20)

⁹³ LW 5.44-45. (Gen 26:9)

⁹⁴ Peter Vardy, *Luther* (Glasgow: Hans Grosshans, 1997), 88.

does not break unity at another level. In Luther, they are held in tension. However, we should not lose this point peculiar to Luther— that is, his paradox is a *Divine paradox* rather than a human paradox. What is the *Divine paradox*? The *Divine paradox* can be pinned down in two different perceptions—the eye of the world and the eye of God. In the eye of the world, there is a “real contradiction”, not just a paradox. But in the eye of God the contradiction proves to be just appearance. Luther does not seek the harmonizing point on the human level but he pursues it on the Divine level. Luther’s *Divine paradox* presents just a real contradiction to the eye of the reason. It is dramatic that Luther explains how God’s paradox looks so real.

The outward appearance of grace is as though it were pure anger, so deeply is it concealed with two thick hides or pelt, namely, that our resistance and the world condemn and avoid it as the plague and the wrath of God, so that the feeling we have within us is none other than that which Peter rightly describes, saying, that the Word alone shines on us like a light in a dark place [2 Peter 1: 19]. A dark place indeed. Thus God's faithfulness and truth must always first become a great lie, before it becomes the truth. For in the sight of the world it is known as heresy. Thus even to ourselves it always seems as though God wishes to abandon us and not keep his Word, and that he is beginning to be a liar in our hearts. And finally, God cannot be God unless he first becomes a devil, and we cannot become the children of God, unless we first become the Devil's children... But the world's lies in their turn cannot become lies unless they first become the truth, and the godless do not go down into hell, unless they have first been to heaven, and do not become the Devil's children unless they have first been the children of God. Therefore, it is actually the Spirit who enlightens and teaches us in the Word to believe differently.⁹⁵

Here Luther provides us good understanding of “unity in contradiction” through his explanation of the vivid contradiction due to “two thick hides and pelts” covering God and his grace. The “two thick hides and pelts” refers to God’s mask he wears in relation

⁹⁵ WA 31¹.249.16-250.1. (1530) (Psalm 117)

to the world. The fact that they are thick suggests the sharp difference between God as he is and God as he appears to us. They are so thick, so complete, and so real a mask to hide the true heart of God that our normal reason and logic cannot find any way to harmonize and unite those two contradictory aspects. Luther understands that the sharp contrast between God hidden and revealed is God's chosen way to let God be God. "God cannot be God unless he first becomes a devil. We cannot go to heaven unless we first go into hell." Then, why should God be a devil to be a God? It is because our natural minds are so foolish and full of pride that we cannot discern the true God from his mask and furthermore we reject his grace. Therefore, as Luther indicates, our obtuse heart lean toward the idea of bifurcation, thinking, "Yes, I certainly hear the friendly and comforting words which Christ speaks to the troubled conscience; who knows, however, how I stand with God in heaven?"⁹⁶ It is such an obtuse heart that it "does not unite God and Christ but fabricates one kind of Christ and another kind of God for itself and thus misses the true God, who does not will to be found and grasped any place else than in this Christ." For Luther, any pride or self-merit or obtuse and stubborn mind rejects God's free given grace and everlasting life and thus "they would simply want to rob him (God) of the glory of his deity."⁹⁷ This is the very thing to obscure the glory of the living God and rob Him of His Divinity—not let Him be God.⁹⁸ Therefore, God first wants to use his hammers to break down our pride and self reliance by being a devil through his strange work (*opus alienum*) with his wrath, so that he drives us to surrender in faith to God's grace revealed in Christ, flowing down from his Cross. In this way, glory and honour will be given to God and God will be God. In this context, God's paradox looks like a distorted heresy and a complete lie. It is a complete contradiction. To our reason, there seems to be no connecting point between the revealed God and the

⁹⁶ WA 21.467, quoted in Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, 189-190.

⁹⁷ LW 26:127 (Gal 2:16)

⁹⁸ Watson, *Let God Be God*, 22.

hidden God just as we cannot find any between God and Devil.

The *Divine paradox* requires God's eye to realize that the contradiction is just an appearance. Only when we are taught by the Spirit to see differently, can we believe that there is no contradiction between God hidden and revealed, and realize that the contradictory aspects of the hidden God are not real, but just appearance. The *Divine paradox* can be understood only when our eyesight is raised into the level of the Divine eyesight, and see through the mask of contradiction which looks like real and perceives that the contradiction is nothing but "apparent". In this world, we do not have God's eye. But Luther introduces a wonderful change of our eyesight into "the light of glory" which we will receive after this life. The light of glory will let us realize that God's mystery, which looks like a "real contradiction", is nothing but an appearance. In the light of glory, what looks like a distorted contradiction proves to be just appearance. Even in the light of "the highest degree of faith", it just can be *believed, but not comprehended*. Only in the light of glory, can it be *comprehended* as "apparent contradiction and real unity". In the light of glory, this mysterious contradiction is solved and comprehended. Only then can we get answers for questions like—Why does God damn him who by his own strength can do nothing but sin and become guilty? Why does God choose some, but damn many? The different perspectives of the light of nature, the light of grace, and light of glory play the key role in distinguishing between the human paradox and the *Divine paradox*. While human paradox is composed of "*apparent* contradiction but *real* unity" to our reason, the *Divine paradox* is "*real* contradiction" to our reason, but its unity can be understood only when our understanding is elevated into the light of glory. The *Divine paradox* makes room for God's unity, while ultimately rejecting contradiction as due to our limited perception and reason. The *Divine paradox* reflects Luther's never-changing conviction that there is an ultimate unity in the midst of the vivid apparent contradiction between God hidden and revealed. In this sense, we can say

that Luther ultimately pursues the coherence of God's identity through paradoxical truth. The relation between Luther's God hidden and revealed can be well understood in the following diagram.

[Diagram 2] God Hidden and Revealed

Revealed God	Hidden God
God clothed in the mask	God naked
Will of sign	Will of good pleasure ⁹⁹
God preached	God not preached
God for us	God himself ¹⁰⁰
Concretized and humanized	Divine Majesty and glory
God who wills to save all	God of predestination
God does not abandon us.	God abandons us.
Merciful God	God chooses some, damns many.
Weeping to see the <i>Deus absconditus</i> consigning men to perdition.	Consigns men to perdition.
Love and grace	Pure anger and wrath
Faithfulness and truth	Liar and heresy
Justice	Makes us damnable, and seem to delight in the torments of the miserable.
Object of love.	Object of hatred
His will revealed in his Word	Inscrutable will
God keeps his Words.	God does not keep his Words
God the Father	God the Judge ¹⁰¹
Deplore the death of a sinner.	Not deplore or take away death
God bound by his Word	God of freedom
God of life	God of life and death, and all in all
His back part (<i>posteriora</i>) which God allows us to see	His face of glory we cannot see

⁹⁹ LW 2.46-49. (Gen 6:5, 6)

¹⁰⁰ WA 3.69. (Glossa: Psalmus vi); 56.196. (Röm Scholien 2:7-9)

¹⁰¹ LW 9.96-97 (Deut 8:19); LW 19.79. (Jonah 2:7)

His face of favor	His back of wrath
We should love, thank and Praise God. ¹⁰²	We should fear and adore.
Christocentric idea: Christ is not only the mirror of the hidden God, but also the only ladder to him.	
Luther's view of God: one and the same God like face and back with the same "I-consciousness" in perichoretic relation.	
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Divine paradox</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">(for our reason, real contradiction, but for the eye of God, apparent contradiction and inner unity.)</p>	

4. God's Love and Wrath in God Hidden and Revealed

In the heart of the relation between God hidden and revealed is located the matter of the relation between wrath and love. Brunner evaluates that "no modern theologian, perhaps no theologian at any period in the history of the Church, has grasped so profoundly the contradictory ideas of the wrath and the love of God as Luther."¹⁰³ Luther's view attracted scholars' burning arguments.¹⁰⁴ The true nature of God hidden and revealed can be understood through our proper knowledge of the mechanism of Divine wrath and love. So far, there has not been a clear consensus in the interpretation of Luther's concept of wrath.

It is Barth and Brunner who show the most contrasting ideas on the wrath of God. According to Brunner, the one who reveals to us the true God is indeed wholly God, but this revelation does not exhaust the whole mystery of God. On the contrary, the

¹⁰² WA 10 III. 154. After speaking of Christ's loving vicarious substitution for us, sinners, Luther says, "When I realize this then I must love him..."

¹⁰³ Brunner, *Dogmatics*, vol. I, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 168.

¹⁰⁴ See Dillenberger, *God Hidden and Revealed*, 100-116; Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, 169-178.

revelation deepens the mystery of God. All that the Son can disclose to us of the nature of God still leaves a residue of mystery: something that can never be said which is unfathomably mysterious.¹⁰⁵ This mystery is the freedom of God to effect salvation and doom, light and darkness, life and death. At the most extreme point of his argument, Brunner contends that *God can be other than the one revealed in Jesus Christ* as light and life, namely, the hidden God, who as such operates not in the Word and its light, but in that which is not “Word” or “knowledge”, in darkness. This is the *Deus nudus*, who does not veil himself in the form of the Son of Man—the terrible Majesty, which is “intolerable to all creation”.¹⁰⁶ Brunner emphasises that for Luther, wrath is a fundamental reality of God. Since the fall, human beings stand under the *Deus absconditus*, or the *Deus nudus*, who is unbearable to the creature like the uncovered rays of the sun. It is the terribleness of God apart from Christ. Brunner understands that, the wrath of God is an objective fact in the thought of Luther, and that all who have not seen God in Christ stand under this consuming fire.¹⁰⁷ However, in contrast with Brunner, Barth thinks that although God is a hidden mystery behind his revelation and remains a mystery because of his essential freedom, there is no God to be feared, or no terrible or naked God behind his revelation. No untrustworthy God remains behind revelation.¹⁰⁸ Barth insists that in Luther it often appears that another God stands behind, or remains behind God’s revelation.¹⁰⁹ However, Barth does not evaluate this as Luther’s primary intention. Rather it would be right to say that it belongs to the veiling of God due to his essential mystery. Barth avers that wrath belongs to the hiddenness of God in Christ, not to God whom one might fear apart from Christ, as in Brunner. Barth claims that Luther was not at all consistent at this point. Some passages of Luther’s

¹⁰⁵ Brunner, *Dogmatics*, vol. I, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 225-226.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 232.

¹⁰⁷ Brunner, *The Mediator*, 282.

¹⁰⁸ Barth, *CD*, II/ 1, 236-237.

speak of God's wrath manifested in Christ. The events of Good Friday are the very case when love and judgement belong together. The holiness of God means the oneness of judgement and grace—that his grace is judgement, and his judgement, grace.¹¹⁰

God's wrath and judgement is only the hard shell, the *opus alienum* of God's grace, but it is the man who knows about grace, about the *opus Dei proprium*, who alone knows what God's wrath and judgement are.¹¹¹

To my judgement, in Luther's perspective, both Barth and Brunner represent just a facet of the truth. Wrath in Luther is a complex and ambiguous concept related to God hidden and revealed. Then, how can we define the relation between love and wrath in God hidden and revealed? Luther consistently emphasises that God's real nature is love. In the *Large Catechism*, Luther defines God as "God is one from whom we expect all good and in whom we can take refuge in all our needs." Having God means "nothing else to trust and believe in Him with all our hearts".¹¹² In the extreme case, Luther compares love with wrath and insists that God's nature is love rather than wrath. Luther describes wrath as "contrary to his nature".¹¹³ Furthermore, in our image of God, Luther regards the portrait of "a gracious and kind Father", not that of "a wrathful taskmaster and judge" as "a sure knowledge of God and a true Divine conviction",¹¹⁴ which suggests that wrath is not God's own nature and wrath is alien to God. Luther continuously describes the wrath in God's alien work as "apparent".

At the same time, we should notice that Luther clearly and coherently describes the God of Hiddenness II as the wrathful God who "is more terrible and frightful than the

¹⁰⁹ Barth, *CD*, II/ 1, 237.

¹¹⁰ Barth, *CD*, II/ 1, 408.

¹¹¹ Barth, *CD*, I/1, trans. G. T. Thomson (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1936). 205.

¹¹² *WA* 30¹.135.33ff. = *Luther's Primary Works*, 34. (*Large Catechism*, 1529)

¹¹³ *WA* 42.356. = *LW* 2.134. (Gen 9:3)

¹¹⁴ *LW* 26.396. (Gal 4:8, 9)

devil” and who “smites and hammers us and pays no heed to us.”¹¹⁵ God’s wrath approaches us as a severe reality, which man cannot bear.¹¹⁶ We feel that real terror arises when we hear his voice, that is, when it is felt by the conscience. Then he who earlier appeared to be asleep hears and sees everything; and his wrath burns, rages, and kills like fire.¹¹⁷ God’s wrath is not a mere gesture or pretension, or instruction, but a terrible reality we cannot bear and tolerate. Eternal wrath puts the sinner into eternal fire. This terrible wrath of the hidden God is expressed as follows: “If God is angry, there is no escape. This is what eternal punishment will be: they will try to flee and will not be able.”¹¹⁸

We are confronted with an impasse in harmonizing these two distinct features. If wrath is the reality of God, then how can we understand Luther’s continuous maintenance that God’s nature is nothing else than pure love; he is not a God of wrath and of anger but of grace?¹¹⁹ How can we explain that God’s goodness and love rather than his terrible power and wisdom belongs to God’s true nature: “God is truly known not when we are aware of his power or his wisdom which are terrible, but only when we know his goodness and his love.”¹²⁰

I understand that the key should be found in *a comparative context*. For Luther, love and wrath are the true and certain symmetrical reality of God hidden and revealed, but at the same time, love is the truer and deeper nature of God. To use Althaus’s words, “what he (Luther) intends to say is that it is false to speak of God’s wrath as though it were an essential part of God’s true being. Wrath is deceptive to that extent, but whenever anyone thinks that wrath is an essential part of God’s being, wrath is undeniable reality

¹¹⁵ Otto, *The Idea of Holy*, 103. He refers to the Erlangen edition of Luther’s works, 36.210ff., 222, 231, 237; 47.145; 50.200.

¹¹⁶ *WA* 22.285.

¹¹⁷ *WA* 42.419. = *LW* 2.222f. (Gen 11:5)

¹¹⁸ *LW* 13.93. (Psalm 90:2)

¹¹⁹ *LW* 12.336 (Psalm 51:3) Cf. *WA* 36.428; 40^{II}.363.

¹²⁰ *WA* 2.141. (*Ein Sermon von Vertractung des Heiligen Leidens Christi*, 1519)

between God and him.”¹²¹ Philip S. Watson has a similar view as he comments in his book, *Let God be God*, “For Luther, both the righteousness that punishes and the righteousness that justifies, both wrath and grace, both Law and Gospel are works of one and the same God, whose inmost nature is pure love.”¹²² Aside from these scholars’ view, we can find that Luther’s picture of God clearly tells us that love is the truer nature of God because Luther explains that God is *in the depth of his being* nothing else than love, and love is Divine, even God himself:

If I were to paint a picture of God, I would so draw him that there would be nothing else *in the depth of his Divine nature* than that fire and passion which is called love for people. Correspondingly, love is such a thing that it is neither human nor angelic but Divine, yes, even God himself.¹²³

Here, the phrase, *in the depth of his Divine nature*, speaks of a *comparative context*: that love lies deeper in the nature of God (than wrath). For Luther, what lets God be God is the depth of His being as “love”. The Godness of God is “nothing but burning love and a glowing oven full of love”.¹²⁴ He is “a furnace and blaze of such love that it fills heaven and earth.”¹²⁵ More concretely, in his theological level, Luther provides us with four basic ideas to support this comparative view that love is truer to God’s nature than wrath.

First, for Luther, love is the true nature of God himself as an eternal being, while wrath is the economic nature that God shows when dealing with the world. Luther uses the term “forced” to explain this point: “wrath is truly God’s alien work, which he

¹²¹ Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, 172.

¹²² Watson, *Let God Be God*, 159.

¹²³ WA 36.424. (*Elliche Schöne Predigten aus der ersten Epistel S. Johannis Don der Tiebe*)

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

employs contrary to his nature, because he is *forced* into it by the wickedness of man.”¹²⁶

Here the concepts of ‘natural’ and ‘forced’ are used as antithetical words. The word, “forced”, implies “far from natural”. It reflects God’s necessity in ruling the world. In another place, Luther explains this necessity as “for the sake of the pious punishment and to check the wicked”.¹²⁷ For Luther, while love is the unforced, natural attribute of God himself, wrath is an attribute forced on God by the wickedness of man. This means that love is the true, proper, absolute, immanent nature of God that he had even before his creation, while wrath is a secondary, economic, relative nature that God began to show only in relation to his creation.

Second, faith supports this comparative view that love is truer to God’s nature than wrath. For Luther, faith always has the characteristic of penetrating into reality. In faith, the heart moves from fear of the manifest wrath of God to love of God in it. For Luther, faith means “against God (to) force its way through to God...to break through to God through his wrath, through his punishment, and through his disfavor.”¹²⁸

Third, relying on the Biblical view that God does not delight in “being angry, condemning, punishing, and plaguing” but “is glad to help and save us”, Luther insists, “If God delighted in being angry, condemning, punishing, and plaguing, He would not forgive sins through Christ...” and “if He delighted in death, He would not raise and quicken the dead.”¹²⁹ Therefore, he concludes, “He has done such things in Christ and has taught us to learn to know Him aright and to recognize Him as a gracious Father who is glad to help and save us.”¹³⁰

Fourth, as a proof that love is the deeper nature of God, Luther ask us to see the works God performs throughout the world, constantly preserving his creatures,

¹²⁶ LW 2.134. (Gen 9.2)

¹²⁷ WA 45.527. (*Das XIV und XV Capitel S. Johannis*)

¹²⁸ WA 18.223. (*Von Vruder Henrico samt dem zehnten Psalmen ausgelegt*, 1525)

¹²⁹ WA 45.527. (*Das XIV und XV Capitel S. Johannis*)

showering so many benefactions on all the world, lavishly dispensing his blessings. Of course, Luther recognizes that some parts of his wrath and punishment are reflected in the world. However, he insists that we constantly see more of his grace and benefaction than his wrath and punishment. Luther supports his argument in a comparative way: “For where one is sick, blind, deaf, palsied, leprous, a hundred thousand are healthy; and although one member of the body has an ailment, a man who still has body and soul is, by and large, an instance of God’s pure benevolence.”¹³¹

Along with this comparative view of God’s love and wrath, for our proper understanding of God’s love and wrath, we need to know a double structure of God’s wrath: wrath for love, and wrath for judgement; in other words, the wrath of the Father and the wrath of the Judge.¹³² The revealed God is described as God the Father and the hidden God as God the Judge and enemy. To the believer, God is our father, but to the unbeliever, God is our judge and enemy: “Unbelief makes a judge and enemy out of God and the Father...Faith makes a God and Father out of enemy and judge.”¹³³ The wrath of the Father belongs to Hiddenness I, because it shows the way the revealed God in Christ works. Luther calls this wrath “wrath of goodness” and “the rod of father”.¹³⁴ This wrath is understood as God’s “alien work”, which is a preparation for his “proper work” of love. It is just fatherly discipline administered by love for our education. Here Luther insists that God’s wrath is just appearance, not God’s true heart. However, even in Hiddenness I, God’s wrath is not light, but a very serious and harsh reality that is hard to stand. In his *Commentary on Jonah 2:2*, Luther demonstrates this point very well. “Oh, what a difficult task it is to come to God. Penetrating to Him through wrath, His

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² WA 3.69. (*Dictata super Psalterium, Glossa: Psalmus VI*); WA 56.196 (*Röm Scholien 2:7-9*); LW 19.79. (*Jonah 2:7*).

¹³³ LW 9.96-97. (*Deut 8:19*)

¹³⁴ WA 3.69. (*Dictata super Psalterium, Glossa: Psalmus VI*); WA 56.196 (*Röm Scholien 2:7-9*); LW 19.79. (*Jonah 2:7*)

punishment, and His displeasure is like your way through a wall of thorns, yet, through nothing but spears and swords.”¹³⁵ I like to call this kind of wrath (as the mask of love) Wrath I. In terms of Wrath I, Barth’s understanding of the wrath of God as a mere expression of love in Christ makes sense. However, we should not lose sight of the other side, the wrath of the Judge belonging to Hiddenness II, which I call Wrath II. Luther describes this as “eternal wrath and perdition”.¹³⁶ It is not a mere gesture or appearance, or mask, but reflects God’s terrible majesty as a consuming fire judging and punishing the sinner with “eternal wrath” and is ultimately connected with the final rejection of the sinner to throw the sinners. For this reason, Luther urges us to flee from the wrath of God to the gracious God, because the real meaning of faith lies in the process from the wrath of judgement to the wrath of love and finally to God’s pure love for us. We find different emphases of Barth and Brunner in their opposing interpretations of God’s nature on the matter of wrath. Brunner focusses more on Wrath II as the undeniable terrible reality of God. Brunner characterizes this as “an infinite reality”, “eternally immeasurable, infinite, irrevocable—an incomprehensible *infinitum*.”¹³⁷ In contrast, Barth focusses more on Wrath I as an expression of love in Christ. Though Wrath II is one aspect of God’s true reality not to be ignored which God comes to express in dealing with the world and history, Luther’s point is that Wrath II is solely for “the stubborn minds and on wicked and hardened hearts”, not for the believers. It is the devil’s strategy to frighten the believers with Wrath II. For the believers, there is not such a God of Wrath II to “fear or flee from”. For them, the hidden God in heaven is none other than the gracious Father who “sent Christ into the flesh and let Christ crucified and die for us.” Therefore, it is the memorable axiom for the believers that “I know no other God

¹³⁵ LW 19.74. (Jonah 2:2)

¹³⁶ *Luther’s Primary Works* 106. (The Large Catechism: Creed)

¹³⁷ Brunner, *Dogmatics*, vol. I, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 170. Here Brunner cites Luther’s *WA* 40^{II}.3.

than the one God who is called Christ.”¹³⁸ If we say that Wrath I is the reflection of God’s love as a rod for correcting his children, Wrath II is the reflection of God’s justice forced by the wickedness of man.

More fundamentally, what is emphasized in Luther is that the wrath and love of God do not mean a division of the will of God, shattering the unity of the Divine will, but a just symmetrical reflection of God’s attributes such as love and justice and holiness. We should know that God’s wrath is the *forced* nature to govern the world because “he is *forced* into it by the wickedness of man.”¹³⁹ In Hiddenness I, God’s wrath is another expression of God’s love. On Luther’s *Commentary on Galatians* 4:3, Watson explains Luther’s term “wrathful love”, His “*zornige Liebe*”: “Love’s wrath, however, is neither the evil passion of offended self esteem, nor the cold severity of violated justice, but the intensely personal reaction of the Father’s all-holy will against sin. Wrath represents the purity of Divine love which, while it freely and fully forgives sin, never pretends that it is not sin and does not matter.”¹⁴⁰ At the same time God’s wrath is another expression of God’s justice and holiness in that it is the *forced* nature to govern the world. Therefore, we can say that God’s wrath is inseparable from God’s love and justice which reflect God’s harmonized and symmetrical attributes. I completely agree with Erich Vogelsang’s significant statement on the love and wrath of God which is the result of through analysis of the *scholia* to Psalms 70/71 of Luther’s *Dictata super Psalterium* (1513-1516): “God’s heart is not divided: once in the past, mercy; once in the future, wrath. No, God’s will is from eternity to eternity united and unchangeable.”¹⁴¹ Christ is the proof. Christ is the very point where God’s love and wrath, God’s love and justice get together in unity. Vogelsang sees Jesus as the harmonizing point holding together love and wrath,

¹³⁸ LW 24.140. (John 14:20)

¹³⁹ WA 42.356. = LW 2.134. (Gen 9.2)

¹⁴⁰ Watson, *Let God Be God*, 159.

¹⁴¹ Erich Vogelsang, *Die Anfänge von Luthers Christologie nach der ersten Psalmsenvorlesung* (Berlin

and *iustitia et iudicium, opus proprium et opus alienum Dei* and keeping the unity of the Divine will, because Christ has Himself born the judgement, which he now executes upon the believer in faith.¹⁴² Here, Watson's words are noteworthy: "The grace and favor shown toward sinners, therefore, always shine out, and shine the more brightly, against the dark background of wrath."¹⁴³

For Luther, the God of Wrath II approaches us in the form of dark mystery which terrifies us with his consuming and relentless fire. This dark mystery is due to our sinful nature which cannot bear God's holiness, and our infirmity which cannot tolerate God's majesty and glory. It is a paradox that too bright and too holy God looks dark to our sinful and feeble nature. However, Luther's view on the hiddenness of God does not end in simply a dark mystery, because Luther persistently emphasises that in the deep core of this terrible God, there is an overflowing burning love. The matter is that this burning love has nothing to do with those who refuse Christ with obstinate unbelief. What they collide with is just the terribleness of this naked God, not his merciful love in it. For Luther, the burning love deeply hidden in this dark mystery can be seen only through *the prism of Christ* and can be accessed only through *the ladder of Christ*. When we come to God with faith in Christ, the thick fog of Wrath II clears up. It makes way for faith, just as the camera lens cover opens so that the lens may receive light. Wrath II cannot block or threaten faith. God transforms himself here.¹⁴⁴ Of course, it does not mean that Wrath II is just phantom, or completely gone in Godself. On the contrary, it is an ever-present reality, but always lurking on the other side of faith, where faith is no more prevailing, just to destroy those unbelievers who bumps against the naked absolute God.

The following diagram shows the relation among God's love and Wrath I (wrath for

und Leipzig : W. de Gruyter, 1929), 64.

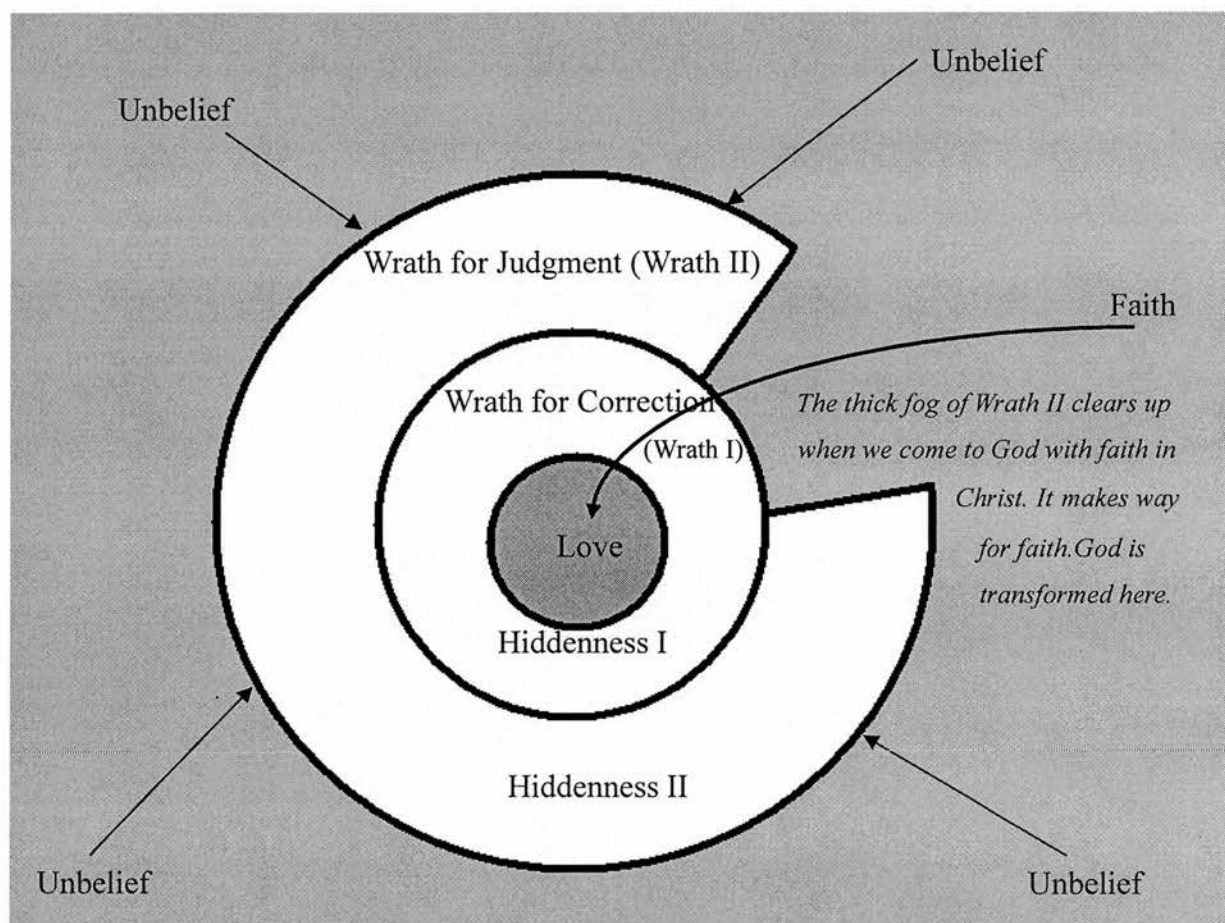
¹⁴² Ibid., 103, 119.

¹⁴³ Watson, *Let God Be God*, 159.

¹⁴⁴ For the idea of Luther's transformation, see Chapter V.8.b. "The Hidden God and Faith" and

love) and Wrath II (Wrath for judgement) in terms of faith.

[Diagram 3] The Structure of God's Love and Wrath in the Hidden God & Our Faith escaping from the storm of God's Wrath and proceeding into God's Love in it.



1. Hiddenness I is composed of 'wrath for correction' and love under it.
2. Hiddenness II is composed of 'wrath for judgment'. Disbelief bumps against 'wrath for judgement.'
3. When faith is approaching, the hard shell of Wrath II melts away. Faith is immune and safe from the horrible attack of Wrath II in Hiddenness II. The meaning of faith lies in the process of getting out of the storm of 'wrath for judgement' in Hiddenness II and proceeding into the area of Hiddenness I, where it breaks through 'wrath for love' and finally finds God's pure love for us and stays there.

5. The Double Structure of Law and Gospel in God Hidden and Revealed

The relation between God's love and wrath suggests us much in our understanding of the relation between law and gospel in terms of *Deus revelatus et absconditus*. Many scholars believe that there is a correspondence between law and gospel. Theodosius Harnack regarded the hidden God beyond Christ as the free, all working, majestic God of law.¹⁴⁵ Lohse argues that Luther's distinction between God hidden and revealed "corresponds" to his distinction between law and gospel.¹⁴⁶ That is, Harnack and Lohse consider that the hidden God is a God of law, and the revealed God is a God of gospel.

However, their views call for more comprehensive understanding. For Luther, the relation between law and gospel seen in terms of God hidden and revealed has an element of complexity, which I will call "a double structure". The double structure can be explained like this. First of all, in the context of "revelation // Hiddenness I", a God of law becomes the hidden God and a God of gospel becomes the revealed God, because in Hiddenness I, law and gospel have the corresponding relation with the notion of *opus alienum* and *opus proprium*. The gospel is hidden under the law just as *opus alienum* is hidden under *opus proprium*. Here the law plays the role of the mask to hide the gospel just as *opus alienum* plays the role of the mask for *opus proprium*. The God wearing the mask of the law is the hidden God. Seen through the light of faith, a God of gospel is revealed under the mask of the law. However, in the context of "revelation // Hiddenness II", God's law pervades both areas of revelation and hiddenness (=Hiddenness II). First,

¹⁴⁵ Theodosius Harnack, *Luthers Theologie mit besonderer auf seiner Versöhnungs und Erlösungslehre*, pt.1: *Luthers Theologische Grundanschauungen* (Erlangen: Verlag von Theodor Blaesing, 1862), Chapter 2. Esp. see. 7, 111ff.

in the area of revelation, law and gospel are the instruments of the revealed God. The law in the area of revelation (Hiddenness I) has the beneficial effect to lead the sinners to the gospel. Law and gospel go hand in hand in the context of *opus proprium* and *opus alienum*. Both law and gospel belong to God's plan of salvation. The law is used as God's *opus alienum* so that God may prepare us to receive the gospel as the *opus proprium*. The law condemns, truly condemns, so that we may realize that we are sinners and completely humiliated. This realization is essential for our receiving the gospel.

Therefore, the function of the Law is only to kill, yet in such a way that God may be able to make alive. Thus the Law was not given merely for the sake of death; but because man is proud and supposes that he is wise, righteous, and holy, therefore it is necessary that he be humbled by the Law, in order that this beast, the presumption of righteousness, may be killed, since man cannot live unless it is killed.¹⁴⁷

Here the law is not the work of the hidden God beyond Christ, but the strange work of the revealed God in Christ. That is, both law and gospel, in Luther's view, really, are instruments of the salvation in Christ. Though they are in serious tension, they are the unified work of one and the same God who is revealed in Christ. Therefore, it is proper for Steinmetz to say, "the Word which the revealed God speaks is both Law and Gospel, both wrath and mercy, both no and yes. The Law no less than the Gospel is the Word of God."¹⁴⁸

However, in the area of hiddenness (=Hiddenness II), only God's law is at work. The hidden God in Hiddenness II is absolute and naked. This God is just a God of law and judgement, apart from gospel, promise, and Christ. This God is so terrible that "everybody should flee who does not want to perish."¹⁴⁹ This God just punishes,

¹⁴⁶ Lohse, *Martin Luther: An Introduction to His Life and His Thought*, 171.

¹⁴⁷ LW 26.335. (Gal 3:23)

¹⁴⁸ David C. Steinmetz, *Luther in Context* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 29.

¹⁴⁹ LW 12.312. (Psalm. 51:1)

crushes, destroys and “devours us all like a consuming fire” without pity. Thus, Luther, in his *Commentary on Psalms* 51:1, depicts this God of the law beyond the gospel and his promise.

The absolute God, on the other hand, is like an iron wall, against which we cannot bump without destroying ourselves. Therefore Satan is busy day and night, making us run to the naked God so that we forget his promise and blessings shown in Christ and think about God and the judgement of God. When this happen, we perish utterly and fall into despair.¹⁵⁰

While a God of law in Hiddenness II “devours us all like a consuming fire” and we “perish utterly and fall into despair”, the God in Hiddenness I can be called a God of law and gospel. While, in Hiddenness I, the law becomes an instrument to make people repent and believe the gospel, in a word, to make people alive, the law in Hiddenness II, pure law unaided by gospel, destroys the sinners without forgiveness. Therefore, the simple division of the hidden God as a God of law and the revealed God as a God of gospel should be more delicately revised as follows:

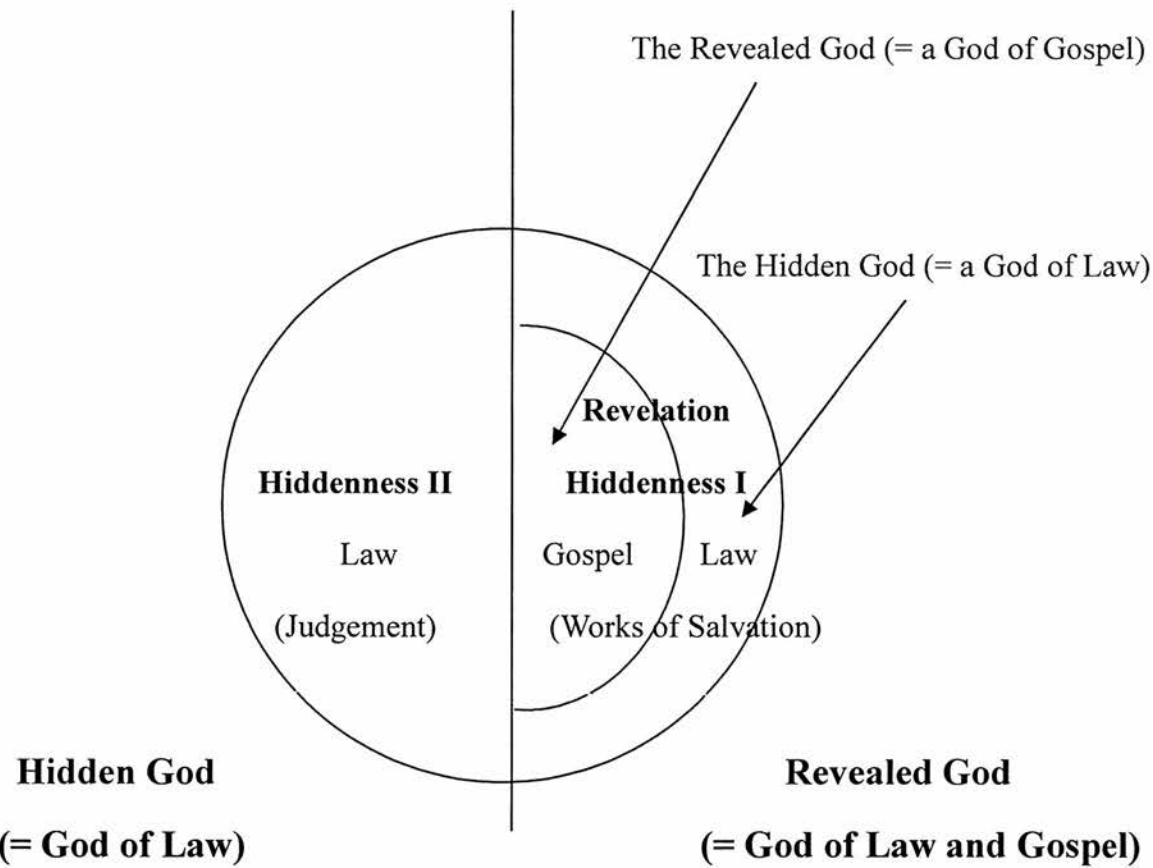
1. In the perspective of “revelation // Hiddenness I”, law hides gospel. A God of law is a hidden God and a God of gospel is the revealed God.
2. In the perspective of “revelation // Hiddenness II”, the revealed God is a God of law and gospel. In revelation, law and gospel belong to the paradoxical work of the revealed God, just as *opus proprium* and *opus alienum* belong to it. However, in Hiddenness II, only pure law and judgement are left that drive people to despair and consumes them in his fire.
3. The law in Hiddenness II reflects God’s naked law of his higher justice which even the angel cannot bear. The law in Hiddenness II does not know “forgiveness”. Above

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

all, it has no Divine intention of love or correction, but only has the relentless intention of consuming with fire anyone bumping against it and putting him/her into eternal perdition. However, the law in Hiddenness I is a creaturely law, accommodated to human sinful infirmity. This law is a levelled-down law through Divine lenity. However, both laws are based on God's justice.

The following diagram explains the above-described relationship more clearly.

[Diagram 4] The Relation of Law and Gospel in Luther's God Hidden and Revealed



6. A Harmonious Dual Image of a God of Love and a God of Predestination

In the introduction of this Part C, I pointed out that Reinhold Seeberg, Max Weber, Ernst Troeltsch and Randall Zachman regarded Luther's God as a God of mercy, grace, and forgiveness rather than a God of harsh predestination with his inscrutable decree. Besides, the most important question may be whether Luther supports "double predestination" propounded by Calvin? Brunner remarks that Lutherans who, following Luther's later utterance, reject the idea of double predestination and teach the universalism of the Gospel.¹⁵¹ I believe that it is necessary to challenge this view. Did Luther give up the idea of double predestination? In many passages, Luther suggests that a God of predestination is his unchanging theological presupposition. Luther repeats that our salvation lies completely in God's sovereignty, not in our free will. In particular, Luther preserves his idea of double predestination from his younger days, though he shows some change of emphasis later.

First, the young Luther, in his *Lectures on Romans* (1515-16), declares, "He (God) saves us not by our own merit, but purely by His own election and immutable will...He shows that we are saved by his immutable love. And thereby He gives approval not to our will but to His own unchanging and firm will of predestination."¹⁵² Besides, what is more important, the young Luther's idea on the election is tied in with his view of double predestination. This is clear when we see his collection of the proofs of immutable (double) predestination. First, he establishes God's election through the passages of John 6:44, John 10:29, John 13:18, 2 Tim. 2:19, Rom 9:15, etc.¹⁵³ In a parallel context, Luther supports God's reprobation through Rom. 17, Exod. 9:16: "I

¹⁵¹ Brunner, *Dogmatics*, vol. I, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 345. Here Brunner introduces "the controversy between the Lutherans, who, following Luther's later utterance, reject the *gemina praedestinatio* (double predestination) and teach the universalism of the Gospel, and the Calvinist...."

¹⁵² LW 25.371 (Rom 8:28)

¹⁵³ LW 25.374 (Rom 8:28)

have raised you (Pharaoh) up for the very purpose.”¹⁵⁴ Besides, Luther explains that both election and reprobation are evident in the passage of Rom. 9:18: “He hardens the heart of whomever He wills, and He has mercy upon whomever He wills.”¹⁵⁵ In the strict context of predestination, Luther paraphrases the passage of “I will have mercy on whom I have had mercy.”

To whom I am merciful in the moment of predestination, to him I will also be merciful in fact at a later time, so that the present tense “I have mercy” denotes the intrinsic mercy of the One who predestine, and the future tense the mercy which has been made manifest to the man who has been predestined.¹⁵⁶

In Luther’s view, many things have the appearance of contingency, but with God, there is no contingency.¹⁵⁷ It is carnal wisdom that “places itself above God” and thus views predestination as an insoluble riddle. Therefore, Luther asserts that the wisdom of the flesh must be replaced by that of the Spirit if one is to delight in the subject of predestination.

Luther in his mid-career¹⁵⁸ develops the idea of predestination in a more sophisticated but more convinced way. In *The Bondage of the Will* (1525), Luther declares that “God has taken my salvation out of the control of my will, and put it under the control of His, and promised to save me, not according to my working or running, but according to His own grace and mercy.”¹⁵⁹ The following views of God evidently describe a God who predestines some with his inscrutable will.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ LW 25.387 (Rom 9:15)

¹⁵⁷ LW 25.373 (Rom 8:28)

¹⁵⁸ Bornkamm thinks of the period of Luther’s mid-career as 1521-1530, in his book, *Luther in Mid Career 1521-1530* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979)

¹⁵⁹ LW 33.288-9. (*Bondage of the Will*, 1525)

...that hidden and awful will of God, whereby he ordains by his own counsel which and what sort of persons he wills to be recipients and partakers of his preached and offered mercy. This will is not to be enquired into, but reverently adored, as by far the most awe-inspiring secret of the Divine Majesty, reserved for himself alone and forbidden to us...¹⁶⁰

It is enough to know simply that there is a certain inscrutable will in God, and as to what, why, and how far it wills, that is something we have no right whatever to inquire into, hanker after, care about, or meddle with, but only to fear and adore.¹⁶¹

In *The Bondage of the Will*, by predestination, Luther covers not only “predestination into grace and blessing (election)” but also “predestination into damnation (reprobation)”.¹⁶² For him, reprobation is not just passive ‘non-election’ which automatically comes to pass by God’s nonaction, but a sure and intentional will of the God which is under the umbrella of predestination. We can find a series of statements in his *The Bondage of the Will* (*De Servo Arbitrio*) to clearly demonstrate his view of reprobation and thus let us be convinced that Luther’s view covers not just election, but double predestination including election and reprobation.

It is likewise the part of this incarnate God to weep, wail, and groan over the perdition of the ungodly, when the will of the Divine Majesty purposely abandons and *reprobates* some to perish.¹⁶³

The simile of the sun and the rain is therefore quite beside the point here, and it would be more correctly used by a Christian if he let the sun and rain represent the gospel (as in Ps. 18[19:4] and the epistle to the Hebrews 10[6:7]), and *the cultivated land the elect, the uncultivated the reprobate*; for the former are edified and made better by the Word,

¹⁶⁰ LW 33.139. (*Bondage of the Will*, 1525)

¹⁶¹ LW 33.140. (*Bondage of the Will*, 1525)

¹⁶² Barth, in his book, *CD*, II/2, 16, indicates that, by the word of predestination, Augustine means “predestination into grace”, a definition of predestination taken over by Peter Lombard, *Sent.* I, *dist.* 40 A. At the same time, Barth points out that Augustine has the view of “double divine decision from all eternity, i.e. a decision with two parallel sides”.

¹⁶³ LW 33.146. (*Bondage of the Will*) [Italics mine]

while the latter are offended and made worse.¹⁶⁴

Admittedly, it gives the greatest possible offense to common sense or natural reason that *God by his own sheer will should abandon, harden, and damn men* as if he enjoyed the sins and the vast, *eternal torments* of his wretched creatures, when he is preached as a God of such great mercy and goodness, etc.¹⁶⁵

Thus far we have the reason and the effectiveness of the simile, namely, that “the Lord knows those who are his.” Then the simile follows, pointing out that there were different vessels, some for noble use, some for ignoble. With this the doctrine is proved, that the vessels do not prepare themselves, but the master prepares them...thus: *as there are elect and reprobate, so there are vessels for noble and ignoble use*...For who will complain if he hears that one deserving of damnation is being damned.¹⁶⁶

We are not alone in this opinion. Philip S. Watson in his introduction of *The Bondage of the Will* (*De Servo Arbitrio*) claims that unlike Erasmus, Luther, in wrestling with the matter of Pharaoh’s hardening, “is led to propound his distinction between ‘the hidden’ and the ‘revealed’ will of God and his *doctrine of double predestination*.”¹⁶⁷ Philip Schaffner has the similar view that Luther taught a double predestination and Lutheran Church followed him only half way in this.¹⁶⁸ Even Calvin is claimed to have regarded *De Servo Arbitrio* as “the chief foundation and source” of the formulation of the doctrine (double predestination).¹⁶⁹ Barth avers that we can find “quite unequivocally double predestination” in Luther’s *De Servo Arbitrio*, just as in Zwingli’s *De providentia* and in the writings of Calvin: “double in that sense that election and rejection are now two species within the one genus designated by the term predestination.”¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁴ LW 33.172. (*Bondage of the Will*) [Italics mine]

¹⁶⁵ LW 33.190. (*Bondage of the Will*) [Italics mine]

¹⁶⁶ LW 33.205-6. (*Bondage of the Will*) [Italics mine]

¹⁶⁷ *Luther and Erasmus on Free Will*, ed. E. Fordon Rupp (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1969), 20. 23ff. [Italics mine].

¹⁶⁸ Philip Schaffner, *The History of the Christian Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1910), vol. VIII, 547.

¹⁶⁹ Preserved Smith, *Erasmus* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Company, 1926), 354.

¹⁷⁰ Barth, *CD*, II/2, 17.

However, this argument would not be enough to mitigate the burning efforts to reject the view of the double predestination in Luther, if we take it into account that there is another direction of criticism that Luther eventually gives up the doctrine of double predestination. First of all, Brunner, noticing the difference of Luther's stance in *The Bondage of the Will* and Luther's *Lectures on Genesis*, presumes that Luther turns his direction from speculative theology he himself took over from Augustine represented by double predestination into the true doctrine of predestination based on the knowledge of election in Jesus Christ through faith, thus giving up the doctrine of a double predestination.¹⁷¹ He claims that Luther frees the Gospel from the burden of tradition that almost entirely obscured it by basing theological truth upon God in Jesus Christ.¹⁷² Paul Althaus says, "In the final analysis, Luther does not establish a theoretical doctrine of double predestination as Calvin does."¹⁷³ Pannenberg comments that there is "essential, real difference" between earlier Luther and later Luther, and between *The Bondage of the Will* and *Lectures on Genesis*, presupposing a development in Luther's understanding of the relationship between the hidden God and revealed God.¹⁷⁴ O. Ritschl insists on an "implicit" correction of the dualistic tension in the concept of God in *The Bondage of the Will*.¹⁷⁵ I admit that in *Lectures on Genesis* there is some mitigation of the tension in the concept of God hidden and revealed, but in my view, here, Luther still does not seem to give up the idea of predestination that he kept in *The Bondage of the Will*.

Our exploration of Luther's *Lectures on Genesis* demonstrates that what is changed since *The Bondage of the Will* is just emphasis, without any sign of correction. There are several points here.

¹⁷¹ Brunner, *Dogmatics*, vol. I, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 168.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 344.

¹⁷³ Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, 286.

¹⁷⁴ W. Pannenberg, "Der Einfluss der Anfechtungsverfahren auf den Prädestinationsbegriff Luthers", *KuD*, III (1957), 129.

¹⁷⁵ O. Ritschl, *Dogmengeschichte des Protestantismus*, Band III, pp. 10ff.

First, Luther's fundamental view in *Lectures on Genesis* is not to reject or correct his former idea concerning God's double predestination, but to give some assurance of salvation through faith to the people who mistakenly experience the darkness of the hidden God of predestination, saying: "If I am predestined, I shall be saved, whether I do good or evil. If I am not predestined, I shall be condemned regardless of my work"¹⁷⁶ or "What God has determined beforehand must happen. Consequently every concern about religion and about the salvation of souls is uncertain and useless."¹⁷⁷ Luther repeats phrases emphasizing the assurance of predestination to salvation:

If you cling to the revealed God with a firm faith...then you are most *assuredly* predestined...¹⁷⁸

Therefore you *are sure* that God is also your lord and father.¹⁷⁹

...the Son of God, who was sent into flesh and appeared to destroy the work of devil (1 John 3:8) and to make you *sure about predestination*.¹⁸⁰

These passages tell us that one of the substantial purposes of *Lectures on Genesis* is to give "assurance of predestination through faith". To that end, Luther continuously asserts that the hidden God who predestines by his secret counsel is the revealed God, and that whoever takes hold of the revealed God takes hold of the hidden God. This emphasis, far from deserting the doctrine of predestination, strengthens the unity of God hidden and revealed,

Second, Luther in his *Lectures on Genesis* does not show any incongruity with the previous work—*The Bondage of the Will*. Here, Luther cites the teaching of it:

¹⁷⁶ LW 5.42. (Gen 26:9)

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ LW 5.46 (Gen 26:9)

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ LW 5.47. (Gen 26:9)

“Accordingly, this is how I have taught in my book, *The Bondage of the Will*.”¹⁸¹ Besides, he keeps distinguishing between the hidden God and revealed God. Above all, in his *Lectures on Genesis*, the tension continues between God hidden and revealed almost close to the splitting concept of God in the book, *The Bondage of the Will*: “For one must debate *either* about the hidden God *or* about the revealed God. With regard to God, insofar as He has not been revealed, there is no faith, no knowledge, and no understanding.”¹⁸² This expression of alternative of “either...or” talks of the juxtaposed concept of God hidden and revealed which he has in *The Bondage of the Will*. In relation to this alternative, Luther clearly distinguishes between the knowledge of the hidden God and the knowledge of the revealed God, characterizing the former with the same statement that “what is above us is none of our concern”, already remarked in *The Bondage of the Will*.

Third, more fundamentally, in his *Lectures on Genesis*, Luther’s emphasis on faith to grab the hidden God of predestination for assurance of election *does not retract, annul, or abandon* his earlier position he had in *The Bondage of Will*. His emphasis on faith in Christ does not collide with his basic idea about God’s predestination even in his later works such as *Lectures on Genesis* (1539). Luther strongly suggests that faith emphasised in his *Lectures on Genesis* does not change the fact of predestination, but just gives us the assurance of predestination.

I will be flesh, or send My Son. He shall die for your sins and shall rise against the dead. And in this way I will fulfill your desire, in order that you may be able to *know whether you are predestined or not*.¹⁸³

¹⁸¹ LW 5.43. (Gen 26:9)

¹⁸² LW 5.44. (Gen 26:9)

¹⁸³ LW 5.45. (Gen 26:9)

Look at the wounds of Christ and at the blood that was shed for you. From these predestination will shine. Consequently, one must listen to the Son of God, who was sent into the flesh and appeared to destroy the work of devil (1 John 3:8) and *make you sure about predestination*.¹⁸⁴

These passages are more than enough to show us that the Incarnation and our faith is “to *know whether you are predestined or not*” and to “*make you sure about predestination*.” They are far from making those predestined who are not yet predestined. These clearly show that predestination is the Divine act that already happened, not to be newly made. This gives us a strong message that Luther did not give up the doctrine of predestination, though he does not explicitly state it. Here, the symmetrical balance between God hidden and revealed through their interaction continues. Luther’s unchanging tenor is to keep this vivid contradiction alive through this symmetrical balance until the final stage where the mystery of God beyond our reason overcomes contradiction:

But if you cling to the revealed God with a firm faith, so that your heart is so minded that you will not lose Christ even if you are deprived of everything, then you are most assuredly predestined...¹⁸⁵

Therefore, it follows that, in Luther’s understanding, the presence of the horrible decree of the hidden God and the assurance of one’s election are not mutually contradictory or exclusive, but are cooperative and complementary.

We can find some supporters for this view. In particular, Julius Müller’s thesis of *Lutheri de praedestinatione et libero arbitrio* (Göttingen, 1832) shows that Luther held a doctrine of unconditional predestination before and after the controversy with Erasmus. Besides, Lutkens, more emphatically, states in his thesis: “Do we find any kind of a contradiction between the commentary on this Genesis text and the doctrine which

¹⁸⁴ LW 5.47. (Gen 26:9)

Luther upheld against Erasmus...*In no way.*"¹⁸⁶ In addition, Kattenbusch as well thinks that in respect to double predestination, Luther never abandoned that idea, though he was not emphatic about it in any way.¹⁸⁷

For Luther, these two concepts of a God of love revealed in the Word and the hidden God of predestination are in paradoxical tension but in symmetrical balance as we see in God's love and wrath. At Wittenberg in 1517, Luther finds some link between them by saying that God's eternal election and predestination are the best and infallible preparation for grace.¹⁸⁸ In his *Bondage of the Will* (1525), Luther puts in a balanced tension a God of the Word promising love and forgiveness and the God who predestinates with an inscrutable will.

God does not many things which he does not show us in His Word, and he wills many things which He does not in His Word show us that He wills. Thus He does not will the death of a sinner—that is, in His Word; but he wills it by His inscrutable will.¹⁸⁹

Here, Luther does not give up, sacrifice, or subject one to the other. Both are undeniable true aspects of God. In his *Lectures on Genesis*, Luther emphasises that when we grasp a God of love, we come to take the hidden God. Luther's final view is that, even though they look like different Gods, and sometimes our reason makes their unity suspect, this is just a misconceived idea arising from our limited perception. Luther's firm conviction is that they are two sides of one and the same God. For Luther, a God of love and a God of predestination are in symmetrical balance.

¹⁸⁵ LW 5.46. (Gen 26:9)

¹⁸⁶ Harry J. McSorley, *Luther: Right and Wrong?* (New York: Newman Press, 1969), 357-8. Here Lutkens' opinion is represented in *Luthers Prædestinationslehre im Zusammenhang mit seiner Lehre vom freien Willen*, diss. (Dorpat, 1858)

¹⁸⁷ Kattenbusch, *Deus absconditus* bei Luther, 201-2.

¹⁸⁸ The 29th of Ninety-five Theses on Indulgences

¹⁸⁹ LW 33.140. (*Bondage of the Will*)

7. The Relation between the Holy Spirit and the Hidden God

Steven D. Paulson has commented that until recently, Luther's comments on the hidden God were thought to reflect some taint of anti-Trinitarian modalism, Manicheanism, or some other embarrassment.¹⁹⁰ However, in my view, we can find that Luther has the intention to keep harmony between the hidden God and Trinity, in the sense that all three persons of the Trinity take the double aspect of God hidden and revealed. For Luther, masks for accommodation are not restricted only to one person of Trinity. All three persons wear masks for accommodation. The Son of God wears the mask of the incarnate human body born of the Virgin Mary and lying down in His manger among the cattle. The Holy Spirit wears the mask of a dove, and the Father in heaven wears the mask of the voice sounding from heaven.

Thus the Holy Spirit appeared in the form of dove (Matt. 3:16), not because He is a dove. Yet in that simple form He wanted to be known, received, and worshipped; for He was truly the Holy Spirit. Likewise, in the same passages, even though no one will maintain that God the Father was the voice sounding from heaven, He nevertheless had to be received and worshipped in the simple image.¹⁹¹

As Lohse indicates, Luther's theory is not intended to replace the traditional Trinitarian doctrine. On the contrary, Luther attempts to find out the link between Trinitarian doctrine and his distinction between the hidden and revealed God.¹⁹² For this assertion, Lohse quotes a passage in Luther's *First Disputations against the Antinomians* (1537):

So we distinguish the Holy Spirit as God in his Divine nature and essence from the Holy Spirit as he is given to us. God in his nature and majesty is our enemy; he requires

¹⁹⁰ Steven D. Paulson, "Luther on the Hidden God", *Word & World* XIX, no.4. (Fall, 1999), 368.

¹⁹¹ *LW* 2.45. (Gen 6:5, 6)

¹⁹² Lohse, *Martin Luther's Theology*, 217.

the fulfilling of the Law... So also the Holy Spirit: When he writes the Law with his finger on Moses' stone tablets, then he is in his majesty and assuredly accuses sins and terrifies the hearts. But when he is "swaddled" in tongues and spiritual gifts, then he is called "gift," then he sanctifies and makes alive. Without this Holy Spirit who is "gift," the Law points to sin, because the Law is not a "gift," but the Word of the eternal and almighty God.¹⁹³

Here, the Holy Spirit inculcating the law in us is none other than the *Deus absconditus*. In particular, Luther binds the Spirit to external means of the Word and Sacraments and thinks that those who would seek the Spirit apart from Word or Sacrament would encounter the Holy Spirit as the *Deus absconditus*.¹⁹⁴ We find even in the Holy Spirit the distinction between Hiddenness I and Hiddenness II. Surely, "the Holy Spirit as God in his Divine nature and essence" above refers to the *Deus absconditus* in Hiddenness II. This is none other than the *Deus nudus*. In contrast with this, "the Holy Spirit as he is given to us" who was "swaddled in tongues and spiritual gifts" refers to the Holy Spirit in Hiddenness I. As the hidden God in revelation (Hiddenness I) wears a mask, Luther's Holy Spirit covers himself with veils and clothing so that our weak, sick, and leprous nature might grasp him and know him.¹⁹⁵ More concretely, Luther refers to various veils that the Holy Spirit wears: "Now however, we see and we hear the Holy Spirit in the dove, in tongues of fire, in baptism, and in a human voice."¹⁹⁶ Luther especially emphasises the mask of the Word and Sacraments. "He (the Holy Spirit) in truth bodily and substantially present and works in us through the Word and Sacraments."¹⁹⁷ Luther does not develop his attempt to link the Trinity and the *Deus absconditus / revelatus* in a more systematic way, but we can say that Luther at least intends to mediate and harmonize two themes instead of juxtaposing them

¹⁹³ WA 39¹.370.12-371. (*Die erste Disputation gegen die Antinomer: Quartum Argumentum Contra* 25)

¹⁹⁴ Lohse, *Martin Luther's Theology*, 237-8.

¹⁹⁵ WA 39¹.244. (*Die Promotionsdisputation von Palladius und Tilemann*)

¹⁹⁶ Ibid. 39¹.217.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid. 39¹.244.

in a separately independent system.¹⁹⁸

In addition, for Luther, the Holy Spirit plays a decisive role in helping us to get to the hidden God as a secret agent. The Holy Spirit knows God's own secret essence. The Holy Spirit reveals "anything definitive about the nature of the Divine Essence", that is, "what God is in His own secret Essence." As St. Paul says (1 Cor. 2:11), "What man knoweth the things of a man save the spirit of a man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man but the Spirit of God."¹⁹⁹ The Holy Spirit teaches true knowledge of God. Even if our reason were completely unstained with the defects of sin, we cannot know what God is, because nature just shows God's existence and God's attributes, but it does not tell what God is. It is the Holy Spirit who tells us who and what God is, in a word, the particular knowledge of God. While distinguishing between the general knowledge and particular knowledge, Luther asserts that the latter can be taught only by the Holy Spirit.

So there is a vast difference between knowing that there is a God and knowing who or what God is. Nature knows the former—it is inscribed in everybody's heart; the latter is taught only by the Holy Spirit.²⁰⁰

The Holy Spirit illumines the eye of faith. Faith alone cannot grasp true knowledge behind the mask. The eye of faith can see only when the Holy Spirit reveals true knowledge to it. If the Holy Spirit does not illuminate it, the eye of faith is as good as blind. In a sense, the difference between reason and faith in perceiving the true knowledge of God is due to the secret work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the hidden agent to make it possible for faith to see the reality through the mask.

¹⁹⁸ Cf. Lohse, *Martin Luther's Theology*, 217.

¹⁹⁹ *WA*, 21, 509. = *Sermons of Martin Luther* VIII, 8-9. (*Epistel am Sonntag Trinitatis*, Rom. 11:33-36)

²⁰⁰ *WA* 14.206-7. = *LW* 19.54-55. (Jonah 1:5, 1526)

In his work, “confession concerning Christ’s suffering”, Luther emphasises that the purpose for which the Holy Spirit comes and gives himself to us is that we are benefited by God’s grace which remains deeply hidden. Here Luther indicates that in the process of the hidden reality being revealed and transferred to the people, the Holy Spirit works simultaneously in two levels: inwardly (in the heart) and outwardly (in the mask). The inward work of the Holy Spirit is done through “faith and spiritual gifts”, which adorns all believers by the Holy Spirit, while the outward work of the Holy Spirit is done through “the gospel, baptism, and the Sacraments of the altar”.

But because this grace would benefit no one if it remains so profoundly and could not come to us, the Holy Spirit comes and gives himself to us also, wholly and completely. He teaches us to understand this deed of Christ which has been manifested to us, helps us to receive and preserve it, use it to our advantage and impart it to others, increase and extend it. He does this both inwardly and outwardly—inwardly by means of faith and other spiritual gifts, outwardly through the gospel, baptism, and Sacraments of the altar, through which as through three means or methods he comes to us and inculcates the sufferings of Christ for the benefit of our salvation.²⁰¹

Finally we should know that the filtering function of the mask we mentioned before²⁰² is due to the work of the Holy Spirit who works in a selective way. The Holy Spirit does not illuminate the eye of reason, but only the eye of faith. Therefore, Gerrish states in his exploration of Luther’s attitudes towards reason: “In the heavenly kingdom, reason is nothing but darkness. The Words of Christ could never be grasped or fathomed by reason, but only as the Holy Spirit reveals them to simple believers.”²⁰³

²⁰¹ LW 37.366. (Confession Concerning Christ’s Suffer)

²⁰² See the above Chapter I.5. “Hiding to Reveal: The Nature of the Mask and Its Function”.

²⁰³ Gerrish, *Grace and Reason*, 17.

8. The Hidden God and Our Knowledge of God

a. Knowledge of God Hidden and Revealed

For Luther true knowledge of God is focussed on the actor behind the mask rather than the mask. Luther tends to think of the God behind the mask as the more real God, and he often describes this hidden unveiled Majesty as God himself.²⁰⁴ In his *Lectures on Genesis*, Luther says that the place we can find God is under the mask: “Look! Under this veil (wrapper), you will be sure to take hold of me.”²⁰⁵ However, how can Christians know and recognize the hidden God under the mask? In other words, what skills are needed in order to distinguish between God and his mask?²⁰⁶ Luther has clear ideas about this.

First and foremost, he argues that we should reject the effort to see the naked God directly. Anybody who attempts to see God directly within his mask—for example, through intelligent contemplation of the created order—cannot bear exposure to the glory of Divine Majesty. As we examined before,²⁰⁷ God is so glorious for us to tolerate his glorious light that we should avoid the attempt to see God directly by speculation. There is a great danger in involving oneself “in the mazes of the Divine Being”.²⁰⁸ God does not encounter us in naked majesty but adjusts himself to the human situation, that is, he covers himself with a mask, revealing himself in the humanized form. Then concretely speaking, what does Luther have in mind with the expression of “attempt to see God directly?” In *Lectures on Genesis*, Luther offers some examples, such as

²⁰⁴ LW 2.46. (Gen 6:5, 6) “...the essential will of God or unveiled majesty, which is God himself.”

²⁰⁵ LW 1.15 (Gen 1:2c)

²⁰⁶ LW 26.95. (Gal 2:6)

²⁰⁷ See the above Chapter I.1. “Why does God hide?”

²⁰⁸ LW 2.45. (Gen 5:5, 6)

speculation about what God is beyond and before time. Luther describes these as “questions that carry us to the throne of the Supreme Majesty.”²⁰⁹ He regards them as “the desire to comprehend naked Divinity or the naked Divine essence”.²¹⁰ However, as Luther declares, “Nothing is more dangerous than to stray into heaven with our idle speculation, there to investigate God in His incomprehensible power, wisdom, and majesty...”²¹¹ Luther thinks that it is dangerous to investigate and apprehend the naked Divinity by human reason without Christ the mediator, as the sophists and monks have done.²¹² Especially, Luther warns against the attempt of *mysticism* to penetrate into God’s inner darkness outside the vision of Christ’s suffering: “We have access to the eternal incomprehensible God only through the incarnated, crucified one.”²¹³ Luther believes that “it was Dionysius with his Mystical Theology, and others who followed him that gave occasion for these speculations concerning the naked God of majesty.”²¹⁴ For Luther, the way to God is not *our ascent to God*, but *God’s descent to us* and afterwards our ascent to God through his mediation: “God will not have thee thus ascend, but He comes to thee and has made a ladder, a way and a bridge to thee. He comes first to us and we do not first mount up to heaven to Him, but He sends His son down into the flesh.”²¹⁵

For Luther, the only way to know the hidden God is through masks. In his *Lectures on Genesis*, Luther clearly states, “It is therefore insane to argue about God and the Divine nature without the Word or any other covering, as all the heretics are accustomed

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ *Luther on Creation: Commentary on Genesis*, 48. (Gen 1:2c)

²¹¹ LW 26.28-9. (Gal 1:3) Watson points out three typical facets of medieval religion Luther categorized as the human attempts to treat “God in his majesty”, or with “the naked God” to “the virtual exclusion of the revelation of God in Christ”: rationalism, mysticism, and moralism. Here, instead of the term of “moralism”, “works righteousness” might be the way Luther puts it.

²¹² WA 39.¹;389.10ff. (*Die erste Disputation gegen Antinomer*)

²¹³ LW 31.128ff. (*Explanation of the Ninety-five Theses*)

²¹⁴ WA 39.¹.389f. (*Die erste Disputation gegen Antinomer*)

²¹⁵ WA 16.144.16ff. (Exod 9.16ff)

to do.”²¹⁶ We cannot have God without the masks and veils. There is no immediate knowledge of God, no more intellectual knowledge of God, which might view God without such veils and covers and confront the naked God. For Luther, the attempt to see God directly through lofty flights of speculation or meditative submersion and intoxication by mystical experience can be compared to the attempt to push the mask aside or glance behind it and see the naked God with bare eyes. For Luther, those who want to reach God apart from these coverings exert themselves to ascend to heaven without ladders (that is, without the Word). This is a misdirected and dangerous method for we cannot stand God’s naked glory and majesty. Luther says the Spirit cannot dwell among us otherwise “except in physical things as the Word, water, Christ’s body, and in the saints on earth”.²¹⁷ Therefore, the right way to find God hidden “under the mask” is “through the mask”. For Luther, as Watson notes, “God is not to be sought behind His creation by inference from it, but is rather to be apprehended in and through it.”²¹⁸ We must learn to find God through the masks behind which he has chosen to make himself hidden to reveal himself.

The most striking metaphor Luther uses to explain the way of “through the mask”, is “cloud”.²¹⁹ In *Sermons on the Gospel of John*, Luther says that we cannot bear look at His brilliant Majesty. It is like seeing the sun with our bare eye. The strong rays will blind us. Hence, God must cover and veil himself behind a heavy cloud. The cloud protects us from the unapproachable light of His Majesty. We see God as we see “*the sun through a cloud*”. Here, the cloud is less a block to prevent us from seeing God; more the most suitable method which enables us to look at the sun. Like a cloud, the mask

²¹⁶ LW 1.13. (Gen 1:2)

²¹⁷ WA 23.193.31. = LW 37:5-150. (This is My Body) Heinrich Bornkamm echoes this idea: “The Spirit of God meets us in an inexpressibly simple and earthly manner in the plain and clear Words of Christ, in His person, in the consecrated Christians, the saints on earth, and finally even in Sacraments.” Heinrich Bornkamm, *Luther’s World of Thought*, 99.

²¹⁸ Watson, *Let God Be God*, 78.

²¹⁹ WA 45.522. = LW 24.67. (John 14:10)

makes it possible to see the naked God. Luther expounds the concrete way of “through the mask” as follows: “Thus it was ordained that he who wants to see and apprehend both the Father and the Son glorified and enthroned in majesty, must apprehend Him *through* the Word and *through* the works He performs in Christendom by means of the ministry and other offices.”²²⁰ God does not wait for us to soar into his ethereal realm beyond our substantial reality of the world. He meets us in a myriad of simple and tangible masks—such as the Word, incarnate Christ, the Cross, the Word and Sacraments, our history, and all his creation. God hides himself “under the mask” to reveal himself, but we can find this God “through the mask”.

In relations to the points we have just made, we find an important principle: the hidden God can only be known by the revealed God, that is, not in a direct way, but in an indirect way. “The incarnate Son of God is that veil in which the Divine Majesty with all His gifts presents Himself unto us”; it is “the first step of error, when men leave the veiled and incarnate God to pursue the naked God.”²²¹ Luther indicates that Paul desires to teach Christian theology, which does not begin above in the utmost heights, like all other religions, but below in the profoundest depths.²²² God will, and may, be found only through and in the humanity of Christ.²²³ Therefore, the revealed God is the starting point leading us to knowledge of the hidden God. With this starting point, Luther rejects the way of knowledge of God “from above”. Luther’s knowledge of God is completely oriented with “from below to above”.

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ *WA* 42.296.22f. (Gen 6:5) Cf. Martin Luther, *A Commentary on St. Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians*, ed. Erasmus Middleton (London, 1807), 11f.

²²² *LW* 26:26-32. (Gal 1:3)

²²³ *WA* 10^{l.1}.208.24, quoted in Mark Lienhard, *Witness in Jesus*, trans. J.A. Bouman (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1982), 155.

For Scripture begins quite gently, leading us to Christ, as to a human person and then to a Lord, reigning above all things, and then to a God. Thus I came to recognize God. The philosophers and those versed in the knowledge of the world, on the contrary, have tried to begin from above, and so they have been confounded. One must begin from below and rise up.²²⁴

This method, known as “from below to above”, can bring us to the hidden God. “If you take the revealed God, he will bring you to the hidden God at the same time.”²²⁵ Luther is consistent to affirm that Christ is the only way to the Father without which we will find only wandering, hypocrisy, and eternal death.²²⁶ This reaffirms Luther’s steadfast Christocentric idea, on which he admonishes us in his *Lectures on Galatians*, 1535 to start from the incarnate God in Virgin’s womb, and the crucified God on the Cross:

Therefore begin where Christ began—in the Virgin’s womb, in the manger, and at His mother’s breasts. For this purpose He came down, was born, lived among men, suffered, was crucified, and died, so that in every possible way He might present Himself to our sight. He wanted us to fix the gaze of our hearts upon Himself and thus prevent us from clambering into heaven and speculating about the Divine Majesty.²²⁷

b. The Hidden God and Our Faith

David Steinmetz states, “Luther’s view of the hiddenness of God is intimately related with his view of faith.”²²⁸ However, Luther states that true Christian theology does not present God to us in his majesty, as Moses and other teachings do, but focusses

²²⁴ LW 26.273. (Gal 3:12)

²²⁵ WA TR 5, no. 5658a: 294.24.34; 295.5; 294.4, quoted in Gerrish, “‘To the Unknown God’: Luther and Calvin on the Hiddenness of God”, 140.

²²⁶ LW 26.29. (Gal 1:3)

²²⁷ LW 26.28-29. (Gal 1:3, 1535.)

²²⁸ Steinmetz, *Luther in Context*, 28.

on Christ born of the Virgin as our Mediator and High Priest.²²⁹ The object of faith is not the hidden God, but the revealed God. Luther states, “In any case, who can direct himself according to a will that is inscrutable and incomprehensible?”²³⁰ This question implies that the hidden God is far from the object of faith. The object of faith is set against a dark, threatening background. Faith cannot rest in the God who is hidden beyond his revelation.²³¹ God does not want us to confront him “in his own nature and majesty”. Therefore, we should not concern ourselves at all with God insofar as he has hidden himself. We must keep in view his Word and leave alone his inscrutable will; for it is by his Word and not by his inscrutable will that we must be guided.²³² Therefore, the object of faith is a God of love described in his Word. This view looks like it collides with Steinmetz’s view connecting the hiddenness of God with our faith. Can we say that the idea of the hidden God has nothing to do with or is harmful to our faith? Luther’s answer is precisely the opposite. Luther thinks that the hidden God must be preached so that the faith of Christians will be characterized as faith that humbly fears God, and admires the greatness of God working in freedom. Such a God cannot be controlled by human reason and even cannot be limited within our faith or the Bible. To borrow Steinmetz’s indication, our faith needs God’s hiddenness because “Human pride is broken down by the hiddenness by the hidden revelation of God which always contradicts human expectation.”²³³ Therefore, we can come to the harmonious conclusion between these two apparently contrasting views—that the hiddenness of God is not the direct object of our faith, but the hiddenness of God is deeply related to our faith, because it is beneficial for our health of faith and let our faith be faith. The deeper relation between the hiddenness of God and our faith can be explored in diverse ways.

²²⁹ LW 26.28. (Gal1:3)

²³⁰ LW 33.140. (*Bondage of the Will*)

²³¹ Gerrish, ““To the Unknown God”: Luther and Calvin on the Hiddenness of God”, 140.

²³² LW 33.140. (*Bondage of the Will*)

First, according to McGrath, Luther's faith is characterized by *penetration*. Penetration means the "ability to see past *visibilia* and recognize the *invisibilia* which lie behind them."²³⁴ However, unfortunately, reason cannot do it because it just stays on the mask. Reason itself has no ability to decipher the hidden God in a mask. Luther warns of the danger of idol worship coming from the limitation of reason. Reason plays blind man's buff with God. "It calls that God which is not God and fails to call him God who really is God."²³⁵ It reaches out to grab him but misses him, and grasps not the true God but idols, either the devil, or a wish-fulfillment dream of the human soul—and such a dream also comes from the devil.²³⁶ It is only through faith that people look into the mask and discern hidden reality—the hidden glory of God, God hidden in the flesh, and the merciful intention that underlies the revealed wrath.²³⁷ As Bornkamm comments, "Where our blurred eyes behold nothing but darkness and tragedy in Jesus' life, there the eyes of faith see an immeasurable light bursting upon the world."²³⁸ Faith breaks its way through the dark tragedy of the Cross to God's real intention of salvation hidden in it. Faith sees the love of salvation under the semblance of severe wrath and punishment of our sin. Only faith can perceive the true significance of the Cross. Even if God "disguises" himself in the masks, a man of faith can penetrate God's mask and see the actor behind the mask.²³⁹ We can find the climax on the Cross. The hidden mystery of the Cross may be unlocked only by the key of faith. Without faith, nobody can understand the true meaning hidden in the mystery of the Cross. What reason can see is just the helpless and abandoned sinner crucified on the Cross. "Only the eye of faith can

²³³ Steinmetz, *Luther in Context*, 28.

²³⁴ McGrath, *Luther's Theology of the Cross*, 168.

²³⁵ *LW* 26.28-29 (Gal 1:3, 1535)

²³⁶ *WA* 19.206ff. = *LW* 19.15. (Jonah 1:5)

²³⁷ Hermann Sasse, "The Theology of the Cross", *The Reformed Theological Review*, vol. 31, 1972, 84-5.

²³⁸ Bornkamm, *Luther's World of Thought*, 71.

²³⁹ Cf. *WA* 40¹.173.24ff. = *LW* 26.94ff. (Gal 2:6); *WA* 43.229.36. = *LW* 4.131. (Gen 22:12); *WA* 44.266.31. = *LW* 6.356. (Gen 37:15-17)

find the presence and activity of the crucified and hidden God who is not merely present in human suffering and actively works through it.”²⁴⁰ We can say that while reason confuses the *opus alienum* with the *opus proprium*, and fail to discern the latter from the former, faith penetrates the former into the latter.²⁴¹ It breaks its way through his wrath, severity, punishment, and disfavor of the terrible hidden God and to proceed toward the pure love of God. At last, faith succeeds in grasping the revealed God as “pure love”. Therefore, for Luther, faith is the only key by which the hidden mystery of the Cross may be unlocked.²⁴²

Faith means to flee (*fugere*) to God in Christ. Faith, in Luther’s sense, is a dare, a risk, or—in one of his favorite words—“a flight”.²⁴³ Satan tries to make us run to the naked and absolute God who is like an iron wall so that we may bump against it and destroy ourselves. In this way Satan makes us forget His promise and blessings shown in Christ and shudder and fall into despair.²⁴⁴ Believers and unbelievers should flee from the wrath of God. In a sense, it belongs to our nature, for “Nature is far more adept at fleeing from God when he is angry and he punishes...”²⁴⁵ However, there is one significant difference. People without faith flee from God, and always seek help from other sources except God. Here Luther sharply indicates that “human nature forever flees, and yet it does not escape but must thus remain condemned in wrath, sin, death, and hell.”²⁴⁶ On the other hand, believers know that the revealed God in Christ is the most secure refuge from the angry God.²⁴⁷ In this context, Luther constantly urges us to

²⁴⁰ WA 1.613.23-44. = LW 31:225-227. (Explanations of the Ninety-Five Thesis) Cf. McGrath, *Luther’s Theology of the Cross*, 175.

²⁴¹ McGrath, *Luther’s Theology of the Cross*, 168.

²⁴² WA 5.84.39-40. (*Operationes in Psalmos* 3:4, 1519-1521) ”Cf. McGrath, *Luther’s Theology of the Cross*, 175.

²⁴³ Gerrish, “‘To the Unknown God’: Luther and Calvin on the Hiddenness of God”, 147-8.

²⁴⁴ LW 12.312. (Psalm 51:1)

²⁴⁵ LW 19.72. (Jonah 2:2)

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

flee *ad deum contra deum* (to God against God). As Gerrish aptly indicates, it is from this flight that faith comes to take on the color of “movement”, not “a repose” — movement not directed toward that hiddenness; rather movement away from the hidden God.²⁴⁸ Therefore, Gerrish indicates, the flight *ad deum contra deum* enlivens faith with vitality, and prevents faith from becoming stagnant or complacent.

In a more positive sense, Luther understands faith as a “transformer”. The question which seriously confronted Luther in the cloister was “How can I gain a gracious God?” Luther found in faith the key to the question because faith is for him a “transformer”. This perception is a more positive than faith as “flight”. It is based on the idea that a God of wrath is none other than the revealed God of love. They are one and the same God. Founded on this sameness, a transformation took place in our perception when we have faith. Concretely speaking, the hidden God makes us dread and tremble. He assaults us with harsh punishment and severe *Anfechtungen* such as pain, sorrow, distress, and tribulation. However, from the time we have faith, the hidden God of terror and severe judgement changes into a God of love and grace. When we receive God with faith, God ceases to be “against us” (*contra nobis*), but begins to be “for us” (*pro nobis*), and reconciliation with God takes place. The God “for us” wears the “pleasant mask” of kind appearance, dressed in “His promises—this God we can grasp and look at with joy.”²⁴⁹ The prophets depended on God’s promise with strong faith in their prayer, because “the promises include Christ and make God not our judge or enemy, but a God who is kind and well disposed to us, who wants to restore to life and save the condemned.”²⁵⁰ Terrible though his wrath, punishment, and threats are to *those who hate Me* (God), “so much the more powerful comfort is there in the promise that they who trust to God alone

²⁴⁸ Gerrish, “‘To the Unknown God’: Luther and Calvin on the Hiddenness of God”, 147-8.

²⁴⁹ *LW* 12.312. (Psalm 51:1)

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

may be certain of His mercy, that is, that He will show them all manner of goodness.”²⁵¹ Therefore, when the Devil wants to frighten us with God’s wrath and judgement, with death and hell, Luther urges us to say, “As for me, I am determined to listen to what the Gospel says to me. There I find a Man whose name is Jesus Christ. To Him I will bind myself with heart and ears, and learn what He says and does.”²⁵² Then we will find not the angry and punishing God, but merciful and kind God the Father who sent Him into the flesh and let Him be crucified and die for us. We need not fear Him and flee from Him any more. Luther’s transformation does not presuppose that there are two different Gods who take turns in dealing with us, a God of wrath and a God of love. Rather, it just means that God shows the believers the deeper love hidden under the mask of his wrath. Therefore, “faith”, as Bornkamm rightly comments, “*transforms* the terrifying aspects of these painful embraces of the hidden God into the gracious countenance of the revealed God.”²⁵³

For Luther, faith is a daring leap into abyss. Luther urges the believers to take that leap. In his *Lectures on Jonah*, he comments,

If God chose to show us life in death, and showed our soul place and space, way and manner, where and how it is to appear, whither it is to go and remain, then death would not be bitter; it would be like a leap over a shallow stream on the banks of which one sees and feels firm ground. But he does not reveal any of this to us, and we are compelled to *jump from the safe shore of this life over into the abyss where we feel nothing, see nothing, and have no footing or support*, but entirely at God’s suggestion and with His support.²⁵⁴

²⁵¹ *Luther’s Primary Works*, 40. (The Large Catechism)

²⁵² *LW* 24.140. (John 14:20)

²⁵³ Bornkamm, *Luther’s World of Thought*, 73. [Italics mine]

²⁵⁴ *WA* 19.217.15. (Jonah 1526) [Italics mine]

Here, the abyss does not refer to God's hiddenness beyond revelation, but to all the world of Divine love and promise "not visible, not demonstrable, and not calculable". Faith does not require information, knowledge, or certainty, but free permission and joyful venturing upon God's unfelt and unrecognized goodness.²⁵⁵ Bornkamm indicates that, according to Luther, the only thing to sustain us in this leap from life's safe shore to the abyss is God's Cross: "over this abyss has erected the sign of Cross."²⁵⁶ In a sense, the leap toward the Cross may be "a blind venture".²⁵⁷ However, Luther is sure that anyone who has the courage to leap into the abyss with faith will "achieve assurance and conviction that can no longer be driven away by any darkness."

Luther's faith always has a "nevertheless" character about it. Our reason hinders us from understanding the hidden God's test of *Anfechtung* for his people. Why do the wicked sometimes flourish and the just suffer? This seems to reflect the unreasonable injustice of God. At this time, faith has the *nevertheless* to believe that there is a life hereafter in which the imbalance will be redressed. Even philosophers and even prophets cannot solve this problem. Reason or light of nature cannot withstand that. *Nevertheless*, the Christians stand it with a firm hope and conviction that though the ungodly do flourish in their bodies, yet they perish in their souls. There is firmly and confidently a life after this life. The great *nevertheless* appears when our faith confronts Hiddenness II. At this point, our reason perceives that God abandons us and he does not keep his Word. Even our faith cannot comprehend or explain those strange acts of God. *Nevertheless*, faith still believes, though it does not understand, that God does not abandon us and keeps his Word. Further, it believes that in the future, in the light of glory, all the mysterious contradiction around God hidden and revealed will be solved and

²⁵⁵ WA 10^{III}.239.13. (Sermon, 1522)

²⁵⁶ Bornkamm, *Luther's World of Thought*, 87.

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

comprehended.

Faith is naturally entwined with the knotty problem of predestination. Luther requests the highest degree of faith to deal with the problem of predestination: “This is the highest degree of faith to believe that he is merciful who saves so few and damns so many.”²⁵⁸ This statement reflects Luther’s own dreadful experience of encounter with the hidden, dreadful predestinating God as a shattering one. How can the merciful God permit many to be lost? How should God, who is proclaimed as being full of mercy and goodness, of His own will, abandon, harden, and damn men, as though He delights in the sins and great eternal torments of such poor wretches?²⁵⁹ Luther falls into “the depth and abyss of despair”.²⁶⁰ However, it seems that Luther gets over this inexplicable mystery by realizing “how salutary that despair was, and how near to grace.”²⁶¹ This realization is not easy to acquire. As Luther says, it comes from “the highest degree of faith”. Luther does not think that faith can make us understand the deepest mystery of God where the guidance of the Holy Spirit stops. However, the “highest degree of faith” jumps over the barrier of the rationally puzzling and inexplicable matter of predestination by the hidden God to lead us to believe in God’s faithfulness and justice behind it to the end. This faith persuades us to stick to God’s revealed personality—mercy, grace, and justice—in spite of all the seemingly contrasting work of God shown in predestination. Therefore, Luther argues that faith is a good guide to lead us to jump over the predestinating, hidden God and take our shelter in the revealed God. When the predestinating God is waiting and threatening in the shadows, the only escape is to see the revealed God who suffered for us in love and find consolation and the certainty of salvation. Luther, who himself dreaded the predestinating God, cites Staupitz’s

²⁵⁸ LW 33.62. (*Bondage of the Will*)

²⁵⁹ LW 33.190. (*Bondage of the Will*)

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

²⁶¹ Ibid.

comforting words in his *Lectures on Genesis*: “Why do you torture yourself with these speculations? Look at the wounds of Christ and at the blood that was shed for you. From these predestination will shine.”²⁶² For Luther, the constant renewal of faith through contemplation of Christ, the mirror of God’s heart, can vanquish anxieties concerning one’s standing before God.²⁶³ The only way to get out of the dreadful fear of the secret selection of the hidden God is to hasten to the revealed God who was incarnated as an infant and grew and died on the Cross. “If you are concerned with your salvation, forget about all ideas of law, all philosophical doctrines, and hasten to the crib and to his mother’s bosom and see him, an infant, a growing child, a dying man. Then you will be able to escape all fear and errors.”²⁶⁴ The knotty, entangled problem can be solved only when faith “grasps and embraces Christ, the Son of God.”²⁶⁵

Luther was afraid that people would misunderstand the proper meaning of predestination, and would take it as a license to live immorally. Luther resolutely criticizes those who would say, “If I am predestined, I shall be saved, whether I do good or evil. If I am not predestined, I shall be condemned regardless of my works.”²⁶⁶ Luther finds in Christ who comes to us in the manger the answer to this argument. Luther makes it clear that Jesus is the mirror of our predestination through which we can know whether we are predestined or not.²⁶⁷ Luther’s God does not want to be found outside Christ. He wants to be found in Christ and his Words of promise in Christ. As Reinhold Seeberg writes, for Luther, predestination is strictly a problem of faith.²⁶⁸ Though sometimes it appears as if predestination involves God working contrary to faith,

²⁶² LW 5.47. (Gen 26:9)

²⁶³ Gerrish, “‘To the Unknown God’: Luther and Calvin on the Hiddenness of God”. 138.

²⁶⁴ LW 26.30. (Gal 1:3)

²⁶⁵ LW 26.177. (Gal 2:20)

²⁶⁶ LW 5.42. (Gen 26:9)

²⁶⁷ LW 5.44-45. (Gen 26:9)

²⁶⁸ Reinhold Seeberg, *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte*, vol. IV, 154.

the real point for Luther is always that faith and predestination belong together. Anybody who has faith was predestined. The predestinating Father sent us his Son as the mirror of predestination. If we really take hold of the Son with faith, it proves that I am predestined to eternal life. Faith creates salvation, for it is the bond which unites the believer with Christ in a spiritual marriage.²⁶⁹ Therefore, Christians should not stare into the abyss of predestination of the hidden God with the tortured question whether or not he is predestined to eternal life, but hold to the revealed God, who is the sure proof of our predestination.

Luther understands that faith becomes faith only when it is tempered by temptation through its knowledge of the hidden God. For Luther, death, the devil, the world and hell combine to assault man with a terrible reality and reduce him into a state of doubt and despair, hopelessness, helplessness, and humiliation. However, paradoxically, though it appears that the hidden God shakes and shatters the foundation of our faith, our faith becomes stronger because we are driven to rely on the revealed God more as long as the hidden God terrifies and threatens us. The hidden God purifies our faith because the idea of the hidden God finally intends only to rid Christians' faith of all stains of dregs (such as all secret claims and all self-righteousness). Faith can prove its reality and strength only when it passes through those darkest tunnels as its test. *Anfechtung* is a good soil for faith to grow and bloom. This faith tempered by temptation of *Anfechtung* arrives at the faith which Barth understands the center of Luther's theology of the Cross calls for—faith as “naked trust that casts itself into the arms of God's mercy”,²⁷⁰ in spite of all harsh reality menacing the faith, armed with dreadful death, hell, and fog.

²⁶⁹ WA 40.229.22-9. = LW 26. (Gal 2:20)

²⁷⁰ Karl Barth, *The Theology of John Calvin*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 46.

c. Three Kinds of Light

Finally, in *The Bondage of the Will*, Luther recognizes some gradation of our knowledge of God hidden and revealed in terms of three kinds of light: the light of nature, the light of grace, and the light of glory, which we mentioned in the earlier discussion of the nature and function of the mask and the *Divine paradox*.²⁷¹

The first light is the light of nature that just lets us see the mask of God. The light of nature, referring to reason or sense perception, works just on the surface of God's mask. Our reason cannot penetrate God's mask and find the actor behind the mask, because God's mask blocks any attempt of reason to read the meaning of the mask. Therefore, for reason, any vision "through the mask" is impossible.

The second light is the light of grace that lets us have the vision of God hidden in revelation (Hiddenness I). It is the light of grace that grasps the hidden meaning behind the mask. The light of grace refers to the light of faith and gospel. This light penetrates and finds the actor hidden behind it. While the light of nature finds Jesus Christ a mere helpless and hopeless sinner dying abandoned from God and human beings, the light of faith finds reality hidden in it: a God of life, glory and resurrection dying for me. This light can understand the spiritual meaning of God's action in the world. The light explains that though the wicked flourish in body, yet they perish in their souls. Luther suggests a summary explanation of the whole inexplicable problem found in a gospel: "There is a life after this life; and all that is not punished and repaid will be punished and repaid there; for this life is nothing more than a precursor, or, rather, a beginning, of the

²⁷¹ See the above Chapter I.5. "Hiding to Reveal: The Nature of the Mask and Its Function".

life that is to come.”²⁷²

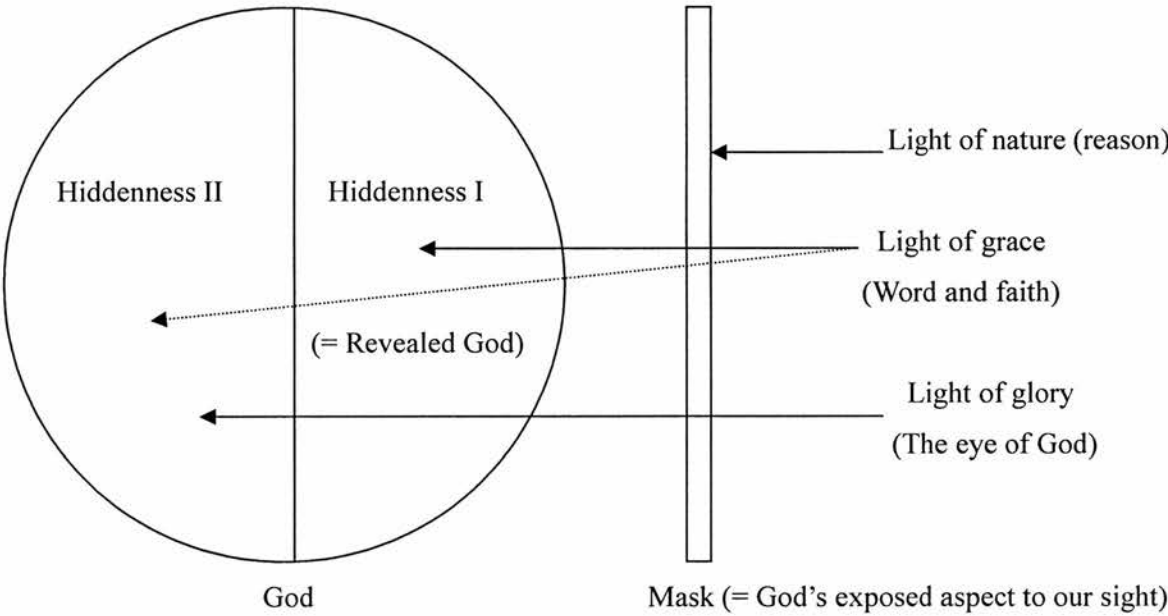
The third light is the light of glory, which lets us have the vision of God hidden beyond revelation (Hiddenness II). In Luther, even in the light of faith, Hiddenness II cannot be understood. The mystery of predestination belongs to this incomprehensible hiddenness of God. For Luther, the problem of predestination is “far the most awesome secret of the Divine Majesty”, where faith cannot find the way out, but just wait for the light of glory. This hidden God hardens the heart of Pharaoh, rejects Esau before he is born, and wills the death of sinners. Even the light of grace cannot explain how God can damn him who by his own strength can do nothing but sin and become guilty. Both the light of nature and the light of grace show us that the fault seems to lie not in the wretchedness of man but in the justice of God. But “when God reveals his glory, we shall all clearly see that he both was and is just.”²⁷³ Only the light of glory can reveal the deep mystery of God, the *Divine paradox*.

²⁷² LW 33.292. (*Bondage of the Will*)

²⁷³ Ibid., 201.

The relation between God hidden and revealed and three kinds of light can be graphically drawn as follows.

[Diagram 5] God Hidden and Revealed and the Three Lights of Nature, Grace, and Glory



1. There are three aspects of the knowledge of God according to the kinds of light.
 - (1) God's Mask = God exposed to our sight
 - (2) Hiddenness I = Hidden God in Revelation = Revealed God
 - (3) Hiddenness II = Hidden God beyond Revelation = Unrevealed God
2. The mark \longrightarrow means "understand and explain." The mark $\cdots\longrightarrow$ means "cannot understand and explain, but believe."
3. The Light of nature just sees the mask, but cannot see the hidden God in the mask.
4. The light of grace can penetrate the mask and see the God in the mask, but it cannot explain the *Divine paradox* of Hiddenness II, only to believe the *Divine paradox*.
5. The light of glory can explain the *Divine paradox* of Hiddenness II.

In conclusion, Luther's hiddenness comprises Hiddenness I and Hiddenness II. This distinction is significant because one's understanding of the relation of God hidden and revealed can be different according to what line of hiddenness one follows. The right understanding can come from the comprehensive perspective that considers both Hiddenness I and Hiddenness II. In Luther, the relation has both sides of contradiction and unity. This contradiction and unity can be harmonized by *Divine paradox*. Here three kinds of lights intervene. In the light of reason and even in faith, the relation between the hidden God and the revealed God is contradictory. However, in the light of glory, the contradiction will prove that it was just apparent because of our limited perception. Therefore, Luther's final conclusion is that the relation of God hidden and revealed is "apparent contradiction and real unity". Luther's idea is deeply rooted in the *Divine paradox*. Luther's God is not only a God of love but also a God of wrath. Love is deeper nature of God, but wrath, too, is a substantial reality of God in symmetrical harmony with God's love. Besides, Luther's God is not only a God of love but also a God of predestination. Luther supports the idea of double predestination. Though Luther put more emphasis on faith in Christ for our salvation as he grows mature, it does not mean that Luther repudiated the idea of double predestination. Luther just wanted the harmony between God's predestination and our faith as the token of grasping the love of God revealed in Christ. Thus, we can say that Luther's theology can be characterized by the paradoxical tension between the hidden God and the revealed God, God's love and wrath, God's love and predestination, and law and gospel.

Chapter VI. The Relation between God Hidden and Revealed in Calvin

This chapter will explore the relation between God hidden and revealed in Calvin. The discussion will begin with Hiddenness I and Hiddenness II in his thought, and their relation. For Calvin, the matter of revelation is directly related to that of accommodation. Ultimately, the relation between God hidden and revealed is anchored on the relation between the accommodated God and God himself behind accommodation. Knowledge of God through revelation can be obtained through God's grace beyond the natural capacity of the human mind. We should not measure God by our limited intellect or subject him to our poor capacity. God lets himself down to the measure of our understanding, and tempers his revelation to our knowledge. At this point, God's revelation and accommodation meet together.

To date, Calvin's relation between the accommodated God and God himself has not attracted many scholars' attention. What has been emphasised is that we cannot know God's essence, and all knowledge of God, apart from his revelation, is a vast abyss that swallows up our thoughts in the thickest darkness.¹ Here the aim is to develop a comprehensive understanding of the relation between God hidden and revealed in Calvin. In addition, we hope to find out what theological method Calvin uses in relation to this subject, compared to Luther.

The structure will be very similar to the preceding chapter on Luther. First, as I said in the introduction to this thesis, against Brunner's view that "Calvin does not make Luther's distinction—which Luther feels to be so important—between the 'revealed' and the

¹ Barth's great motto in the knowledge of God is that God can be known only through God. Roland M. Frye, in his article, "Calvin's Theological Use of Figurative Language", emphasises that we cannot know God in himself and that it is more to the point to begin by asking *qualis sit Deus* (what God is like).

‘hidden’ will of God and if he does think of it, he takes a quite different view”,² I will show that there is a sure distinction between the revealed will and the hidden will, and even a distinction between Hiddenness I and Hiddenness II. In addition, we will see that there is a significant similarity, not “a quite a different view”, in spite of the presence of some different emphases. In Calvin, as in Luther, a Christocentric focus is the central core of the unity of God hidden and revealed. Especially, against Dowey’s comments that “[Calvin] never conceived of his theological task as an effort to harmonize the deeper paradoxes of Scripture or to explain what he regarded as its central mysteries”,³ I will demonstrate Calvin’s efforts to shatter apparent contradiction in God hidden and revealed. This effort is significant in my thesis because it characterizes the distinct method of Calvin, contrasted with Luther’s method in dealing with the theme of God hidden and revealed. At the same time, I will try to show that unlike the view of scholars such as Reinhold Seeberg, Max Weber, Ernst Troeltsch, and Randall Zachman, Calvin’s God is not only a God of a harsh predestination, who judges and damns people into perdition with an inscrutable will, but also a God of love and forgiveness.⁴ Therefore, my focus will be on the relation between Hiddenness I and Hiddenness II, the accommodated God and God in himself, and Calvin’s balanced idea between a God of predestination and a God of love. Here, Christ will be emphasised as the basis of God’s unity. As in Luther, I will deal with the matter of the Holy Spirit in the scheme of God hidden and revealed. Finally, I will discuss how we can get the knowledge of God and the nature and function of faith in relation to it.

² Emil Brunner, *Dogmatics*, vol. I, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 325.

³ Dowey, *The Knowledge of God in Calvin’s Theology*, 40.

⁴ See the view of Reinhold Seeberg, Max Weber, and Ernst Troeltsch and Randall Zachman in the introduction of this thesis.

1. Hiddenness I and Hiddenness II

So far, what we have not fully investigated is whether it is possible to distinguish between Hiddenness I and Hiddenness II in Calvin, as in Luther. If so, what characteristics does each have? An answer can be found in Calvin's *Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans*.

As then we cannot by our own faculties examine secrets of God, so we are admitted into a certain and clear knowledge of them by the grace of the Holy Spirit: and if we ought to follow the guidance of the Spirit, where he leaves us, there we ought to stop and as it were to fix our standing. If any one will seek to know more than what God has revealed, he shall be overwhelmed with the immeasurable brightness of inaccessible light. But we must bear in mind the distinction, which I have before mentioned, between the secret counsel of God, and his will made known in Scripture; for though the whole doctrine of Scripture surpasses in its height the mind of man, yet an access to it is not closed against the faithful, who reverently and soberly follow the Spirit as their guide; but the case is different with regard to his hidden counsel, the depth and height of which cannot by any investigation be reached.⁵

Here we find that, like Luther, Calvin distinctly divides Hiddenness I and Hiddenness II, even though he did not use those terms. For Calvin, Hiddenness I and Hiddenness II are related to the distinction of God's mysteries. Calvin understands that all the mysteries of God far exceed the comprehension of our minds. However, Calvin divides all the mystery of God into two kinds of mysteries, in which the Holy Spirit's role is emphasised. One is the mystery that the Holy Spirit illuminates so that the faithful may understand by the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The other is the mystery that the Holy Spirit stops his guidance, and "where he leaves us, there we ought to stop and fixing our standing." While the former mysteries refer to Hiddenness I, the latter refer to Hiddenness II. For Calvin, the former

⁵ *Comm. on Rom.* 11:34.

mysteries are expressed as both “the secrets of God” and “His will made known in Scripture”, which shows the same characteristics of Luther’s Hiddenness I: coexistence of hiddenness and revelation. It is *hidden* because it belongs to secrets of God that are not open to all and at the same time it is *revealed* because it was made known in Scripture. For the mysteries of the latter, Calvin uses a special term—“the secret (hidden) counsel of God”,⁶ which is deeply related to predesti-nation. In the abyss, we suddenly fall into the deeper Hiddenness II (hidden beyond revelation). Calvin characterizes God’s abyss as Hiddenness II, distinct from God’s mysteries in the Bible as Hiddenness I. Three important observations need to be made at this point. First, while Hiddenness I belongs to the area of “what God has revealed”,⁷ Hiddenness II belongs to the area of “more than what God has revealed”.⁸ Second, while the faithful are allowed to access the secret of Hiddenness I, Hiddenness II is forbidden and closed even to the faithful. Anybody who tries to break into Hiddenness II will be overwhelmed with “the immeasurable brightness of inaccessible light”. Therefore, we should stop and fix our standing before the door of Hiddenness II. Third, Calvin believes that we can follow the Holy Spirit as our guide in the area of Hiddenness I, but the Holy Spirit’s guidance cannot reach Hiddenness II represented by “His hidden counsel”.

Our understanding of Calvin’s distinction between Hiddenness I and Hiddenness II gets deeper through the striking contrast between terms he often uses, —“comprehended mysteries” vs. “abyss”. For example:

It is certainly true that in the law and the gospel are *comprehended mysteries* that extend far above the bounds of our sense. But since God illumines the minds of his own with the spirit of understanding, so that they may grasp these mysteries which he has deigned to lay open by his Word, now no *abyss* is there, but a way in which we are to walk in safety and a lamp to guide our feet, the light of life and the school of certain and manifest truth. Yet

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ *Comm. on Rom.* 11:35

his wonderful way of governing the world is justly called an “abyss” because, while hidden from us, it ought reverently to be adored.⁹

Here, Hiddenness I is expressed as “comprehended mysteries”. Why comprehended? It is because God has deigned to lay them open by his Word. Therefore, in the light of this, we can add three points further to the three we have just made. First, there is a subtle coexistence of hiddenness and revelation in the area of Hiddenness I. It is hidden in that it is “mysteries that extends far above the bounds of our sense.” At the same time, it is revealed in that “he (God) has deigned these mysteries to lay open by his Word”, and “God illumines the minds of his own with the spirit of understanding.” Second, however, unlike Hiddenness I, Hiddenness II is characterized with the word, ‘abyss’, where we cannot find any lamp to guide our feet and just confront the complete darkness. Third, the last phrase, “it ought reverently to be adored”, suggests that the Christian can make peace with God’s hidden will beyond revelation.

2. The Accommodated God and God Himself

Ultimately the question of the relation between God hidden and revealed in Calvin is directly linked to the relation between the accommodated God and God himself. This relation can be examined in terms of unity and continuity. Are the accommodated God and God himself in unity or in contradiction? Can we find any continuity between them? These questions can be asked in several aspects.

⁹ *Inst.* I.xvii.2.

a. Continuity in Discontinuity

In general, Calvin describes the accommodated God as “God as he is seen”, and God himself as “God as he is”. The accommodated God is not the God as he really is, but the God as he is seen. As David Wright properly indicates, the revealed God is always still for Calvin the partly hidden God, “for all knowledge of God is accommodated knowledge—which means knowledge tailored to our measure and hence knowledge curtailed.”¹⁰ To illustrate this, consider the case of the burning bush. For the vision of God in the form of a burning bush, Calvin does not think that “it was such a view of God, as divested him of his bodily senses, and transferred him beyond the trials of this world.”¹¹ Calvin’s basic understanding is that God at that time only showed him a certain symbol of His presence; but Moses was far from seeing God as He is. Though the burning bush let us “taste in part what could not be fully apprehended”, there is a great distance between the accommodated burning bush and God himself. For Calvin, the significant difference between accommodation and God himself is this: “Thus such forms of speaking (that God has mouth, ears, hands and feet) do not so much express clearly what God is like as accommodate the knowledge of him to our slight capacity.”¹² Here, Calvin gives us some hint on the relation: “the knowledge accommodated to our slight capacity”. This accommodated knowledge does not show us “God as he is”, but “God as he seems to us”¹³ Then, does “accommodation” imply discontinuity between God known in revelation and God’s essential being? Could it mean that God’s ways, even God’s disposition toward creatures, are completely different from and do not talk about anything about God himself? This question leads us to search for the ultimate relation between the accommodated God

¹⁰ Wright, “Calvin’s Accommodating God”, 19.

¹¹ *Comm. on Heb.* 11:27.

¹² *Inst.* I.xiii.1.

¹³ *Inst.* I..xvii.13.

and God himself: What is the relation between what God is as he is and what God is as he appears to us?

First of all, Calvin recognizes that there is a great gap between God as he is and God as he appears. The great valley between them is well represented in his metaphor of sunshine and sun. Knowledge through the sunlight is quite different from knowledge of the sun itself. Therefore, Calvin explains this point as follows:

For how can the human mind measure off the measureless essence of God according to its own little measure, *a mind as yet unable to establish for certain the nature of sun's body, though men's eye steadily gaze upon it?* Indeed, how can the mind by its own leading come to search out God's essence when it cannot even get to its own? ¹⁴

In the *Institutes*, Calvin sharply points out that “whatever visible forms of God man devises are *diametrically opposed to His nature*.”¹⁵ This represents the great discrepancy between God's real nature and any visible forms we invented to represent God—*diametrically opposite*. Though this relation is true in the case of an idol we invent, we cannot deny that Calvin's understanding of accommodation has similar aspects. When God says he deceives the false prophets (Ezekiel 14:9), Calvin comments that through this “very harsh” and “improper” figure (of deceiver) he transfers to himself “what properly does not belong to him.”¹⁶ In his *Commentary on Zephaniah*, Calvin speaks of the relation between the accommodated expression of the love of a husband and his wife and God's real nature.

We see how God lowers himself to us. For if we consider whether such expressions are appropriate to God's nature, we must say bluntly that nothing is more *improper*. It is utterly unseemly that God be depicted to us like a husband wholly consumed with love for

¹⁴ *Inst.* I.xiii.21. [Italics mine]

¹⁵ *Inst.* II.viii.17.

¹⁶ *Comm. on Ezek.* 2:59.

his wife.¹⁷

Here Calvin does not dare to say “opposite”, as he said in the case of an idol. However, in a similar context, he avers that the accommodated expression is not appropriate to God’s nature. Calvin asks, “What could be more alien to God’s glory than exult like a human being who is carried away by joy arising from love?”¹⁸ Calvin calls it “*improper*”. So can we conclude that the modes of accommodation have nothing to do with God as he is, or that the knowledge through accommodation is false and meaningless? I understand that this is far from what Calvin intends to say. It is a misdirected interpretation of accommodation that leads us to anticipate post-Kantian theological agnosticism, as though God were unknowable.¹⁹ Calvin’s real intention is to emphasise “the greatness of God’s indulgence towards us, who thus lowers himself for our sake and transforms himself, as it were, assuming incongruous masks (*alienas personas*).” At the same time, Calvin tries to show “how deep rooted is unbelief, when God cannot serve our good and amend this evil...without in some sense departing from himself to come nearer to us.”²⁰

Calvin would not drive the discrepancy too harshly, because it would make his whole theology unstable and shaky. Calvin’s basic position is to convince us that there is a strong unity between the accommodated God and God himself. However, this unity does not mean *sameness*. It would be hasty and even dangerous to conclude that the entire aspect of the accommodated God is an exact replica of God himself, because it makes God’s majestic glory smaller: “It was the drunkenness of the people, that is their unresponsiveness, which drove him to compare himself to a drunk.” Calvin asks us not to equate the appearance of God in an accommodated form with God himself.

¹⁷ *Comm. on Zep.* 3:17 [Italic mine]

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Cf. Paul Helm, “John Calvin on Divine Accommodation”, an unpublished paper read to the Calvin Group of the Rutherford Fellowship, Edinburgh, March 1992.

As therefore our capacity cannot endure the fullness of the infinite glory which belongs to the essence of God, it is necessary whenever he appears to us that he put on a form adapted to our capacity . . . but as I have already said, *we ought not to imagine God in his essence to be like any appearance* to his own prophet and other holy fathers, but he continually put on various appearances, according to man's comprehension, to whom he wished to give some signs of his presence.²¹

We should know that God's accommodation is far from meaningless or empty or false. Calvin constantly says that accommodation provides some sure, if not complete, knowledge of God, and that the accommodated image of God has a correlation with God himself. Sometimes he emphasises that God himself is present in his accommodation. Calvin shows innumerable illustrations for this in the Bible. First of all, Moses exclaims, "The Lord went before them, speaking of the journey of the cloud before the children of Israel."²² The Psalmist, indicating the process of the Ark, remarks, "God is gone up with triumph."²³ "The name of Jehovah is here applied to the Ark; for although the essence or majesty of God was not shut up in it, nor His power and operation fixed to it, yet it was not *a vain and idle symbol* of His presence."²⁴ Therefore, in Calvin's view, "The ark of the covenant was not *a vain and illusory symbol* of the presence of God."²⁵ This is true of God's vision. In his *Commentary on Isa.* 6:1-5, where Isaiah saw the vision of God in the temple, Calvin assures us that whenever God gives any sign whatever of his presence, he is in truth present with us. "He does not play a game with such meaningless shapes as men use when they impiously distort him with their inventions." More strictly speaking, "the vision was *in no way a false symbol* of the presence of God." Calvin concludes that Isaiah is right in asserting that he saw God. This signifies that God's accommodation entails some substantial aspect of God's reality: God is present in his accommodated forms. For Calvin,

²⁰ *Comm. on Zep.* 3:17.

²¹ *Comm. on Dan.* 7:9. [Italics mine]

²² *Exod.* 13:21.

²³ *Comm. on Ps.* 47:6.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

accommodation is the true sign to signify the presence of God. There are numerous examples to reveal God's presence in accommodation. In his *Commentary on Ps 132:14*, Calvin indicates that when they rightly worshipped God in the temple, according to His Word, they stood, as it were, in His presence, and would actually experience that He was near to them.²⁶ In his *Commentary on Ezekiel 1:28*, Calvin expresses, "Although God has never appeared in His immeasurable glory and has never manifested Himself as He really exists, yet we must nevertheless hold that He has so appeared as to leave no doubt in the minds of His servants as to knowing that they have seen God."²⁷ In the New Testament, when John is said to have seen the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove, Calvin notices that the name Spirit is transferred to the symbol and comments that there is nothing false in the statement. Here Calvin indicates that the form of a dove becomes the evidence to show that the Holy Spirit is in Christ: "John did not indeed see the essence of the Spirit, but he did have certain, clear, and unambiguous evidence that the Spirit of God dwelt in Christ."²⁸ Besides, the metaphor of "God's face and back" also strengthens "the continuity" between the accommodated God and God himself. Like Luther, Calvin connects the distinction of the accommodated God and God as he is with the distinction of "God's face and God's back. If God as he is corresponds to God's face, God accommodated to us corresponds to God's back. "In short, God now presents himself to be seen by us, not such as he is, but such as we can comprehend. Thus is fulfilled what is said by Moses, that we see only as it were his back, (Exodus 33:23), for there is too much brightness in his face."²⁹ God's face and back do not each refer to a different God. God's face and God's back refer to the same God. For Calvin, the discrepancy between accommodation and God himself does not mean that we cannot get to some substantial knowledge of God. Rather, Calvin emphasises "the

²⁵ *Comm. on Ps. 24:8.*

²⁶ *Comm. on Ps. 132.14.*

²⁷ *Comm. on Ezek. 1:28.*

²⁸ *Comm. on Isa. 6:1-5.*

possibility of true knowledge.” In his *Commentary on Daniel 7:9*, the Ancient of Days is depicted with “garment white as snow and the hair of his head like the pure wool; his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire.” Calvin remarks, “God in reality neither occupies any throne, nor is carried on wheels.” In this tense conflict Calvin suggests the possibility of the true knowledge of God: “we ought not to imagine God in his essence to be like any appearance to his own prophets”, nevertheless such appearances, “*afforded them a taste of his presence for the sure acknowledgement of his Deity...they* (the prophets) comprehended him as far as it was useful for them and they were able to bear it.”³⁰ This statement shows that Calvin recognizes that we can access the spiritual reality hidden in accommodation.

In brief, it will be right to say that Calvin thinks of the paradoxical relation of “continuity in discontinuity”. In accommodation, continuity and discontinuity go together. Though there is a great ravine between God as he appears to us and God as he is, the accommodated knowledge of God surely contains a sure and substantial knowledge of God, though they are not complete.³¹ God’s accommodating modes become the focal point where we not only meet and experience the real presence of God, but also get some knowledge of God.³²

b. Pursuing Unity by Shattering Contradictions: Unity in Contradiction

Calvin’s spirit stands firm on the unity between God hidden and revealed. Calvin’s unflinching premise is that there cannot be any contradiction in God and that all apparent contradictions must come from our misconceived ideas and the limitations of human

²⁹ *Comm. on 1 John 3:2.*

³⁰ *Comm. on Dan. 7:9* [Italics mine]

³¹ *Comm. on Exod. 33:20*

³² *Comm. on Ps. 42:2.*

reason. Calvin does not feel so much conflict between God hidden and revealed as Luther does. While Luther tries to put all contradictory elements into the kettle of the *Divine paradox*, Calvin is ready to shatter all contradictory elements that his opponents raise and thus prove God's unity. Calvin's effort to prove God's unity in apparent contradiction is ceaseless and huge. We can see his efforts in many areas of his theology.

1) Against 'Capricious God *ex Lex*' in *Potentia Absoluta*

Earlier in this thesis, we did not fully develop, but briefly examined Calvin's views on *potentia absoluta*, which he made use of for his concept of the hidden God.³³ Here we intend to explore Calvin's argument against it and his theological use of it. A. Ritschl indicates that the idea of God which dominates the doctrine of double predestination implies the *potentia absoluta* of the nominalists.³⁴ However, we give more attention to the fact that Calvin's deepest concern and effort in illuminating the concept of the hidden God is to shatter the caricature of God as an arbitrary, heartless despot, disposing of the destinies of human beings in this life and the next with capricious cruelty. Calvin understands that the doctrine of predestination itself will not be popular. Calvin knew very well that there lurks a danger that a God of predestination may be painted as an arbitrary and cruel despot because he is the God who predestines some into eternal death by solely his eternal decree before they were born and when they did nothing good or bad. Besides, some of Calvin's views surrounding double predestination such as a God of sovereignty, a God of Divine freedom, a God of transcendence, and a God as the absolute standard of law were vulnerable to his opponent's criticism. Especially, Pighius and Georgius criticized Calvin's idea, insisting that "it lies within his freedom whether one is partaker of the grace

³³ See the above Chapter IV.2. "God as a Remodelled *Potentia Absoluta*".

³⁴ A. Ritschl, "Geschichtliche Studien zur Christlichen Lehre von Gott" in the *Jahrbücher für Deutsche*

of adoption; and it does not depend on the counsel of God who are elect and who reprobate; but each determines for himself one state or the other by his own will.”³⁵ Bolsec asserts that “all men are endowed with freewill so that the power of obtaining salvation is placed at their disposal.”³⁶ Therefore, in the face of these oppositions, it is natural that his effort to shatter the misconceived image of God became more elaborate, pertinacious, and logical.

Calvin’s effort to fight against the image of “capricious cruel despot” begins with his struggle with the scholastic notion of *potentia absoluta*. Calvin struggles with this concept because the raw concept looks very dangerous to Calvin. When Calvin hears the term, “absolute power”, he imagines an inordinate power that makes the hiddenness of God a frightening abyss. Calvin’s struggle with the concept of “absolute power” from the Middle Ages is the fight against the image of “unreliable God who acts arbitrarily”. “Absolute power” refers to the power not realized by creating the established order among total possibilities at first open to God, and is to be contrasted with “ordinate power” which refers to the possibilities realized in the created order.³⁷ Calvin’s general understanding of this distinction is saturated with negativity. His natural response to this term is sharply

Theologie, vol. 13 (Gotha, 1868), 107.

³⁵ *Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God*, 55.

³⁶ A. Mitchell Hunter, *The Teaching of Calvin* (London: James Clarke & Co. Ltd, 1950), 121.

³⁷ According to Steinmetz, while the absolute power as the purely hypothetical realm was the major idea of scholars in the thirteenth and fourteenth century, the usage of these terms became broad and casual among the scholars in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. However, this term does not have to be interpreted as the negative image of such a capricious dictator as Calvin imagined through this term. In a positive perspective, there are some virtues in its theological motive and significance. The great motive to represent by this distinction by medieval theologian is to protect the freedom and transcendence. David Steinmetz thinks of this distinction as very useful for its great conviction that “creation did not exhaust the possibilities open to God and that Divine omnipotence stretches beyond the furthest bounds the human imagination can reach” (Cf. David Steinmetz, *Calvin in Context*, 45). Alister McGrath, too, recognized some significance in this notion of self-limitation represented in this distinction as “important in modern theology, and merits further exploration.” in Alister McGrath, *Christian Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), 283.

offensive.

That invention, which the Schoolmen have introduced, about the absolute power of God, is shocking blasphemy. It is all one as if they said that God is a tyrant who resolves to do what he pleases, not by justice, but through caprice. Their schools are full of such blasphemies, and are not unlike the heathens, who said that God sports with human affairs.³⁸

In a more definite way, Calvin declares in a passage in the *Institutes*: “We do not advocate the fiction of “absolute might”; because this is profane, it ought rightly to be hateful to us. We fancy no lawless god who is a law unto himself.”³⁹ He describes this distinction as an invented fiction tantamount to “shocking blasphemy” and “profane”. Calvin’s hostility to this distinction mainly comes from its inherent danger of depicting the hidden power of God as the power of an arbitrary tyrant, not as the infinite power of a just Father. This image of God as an arbitrary tyrant, he argues, springs from separating God’s power from his justice. By the term *potentia absoluta*, scholastic theologians identify one picture of a God of absolute freedom and transcendence with another picture of a God of *ex lex* (out of law), free from all claims and demands external to his own will. A God of *ex lex* takes on the image of a capricious God scandalous to human reason and imagination. Therefore, people contend with such a God in many ways. As Calvin notes, they ask by what right the Lord becomes angry at his creatures who have not provoked him by any previous offense. Is it not more like the caprice of a tyrant than the lawful sentence of a judge, to devote to destruction whomever he pleases?⁴⁰

³⁸ *Comm. on Isa.* 23:9.

³⁹ *Inst.* III.xxiii.2.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

Calvin's attack mainly focusses on what he sees as his opponents' decision to identify Divine freedom and transcendence with *ex lex* or beyond law.⁴¹ In his *Sermons on Job*, Calvin refers to the teaching of "the doctors of the Sorbonne" as "a diabolical blasphemy forged in Hell" because they insist that God has an "*absolute or lawless power*".⁴² In this book, Calvin strives to follow Job's baffling quest for Divine justice in a world where the wicked often triumph and the good suffer. The nature of Job's tragedy leads Job to articulate the proper relation between God's justice and power. In the *Institutes*, Calvin blames the distinction for its separating God's omnipotent power from his justice and thus transforming the gracious and merciful Father into the ruthless and arbitrary tyrant. For Calvin, a God of predestination is not a tyrant whose power can run contrary to his righteousness.⁴³ God's free decision always reflects his wisdom and justice, which are upheld, rather than contradicted, by the fact of predestination.⁴⁴

To break down his opponents' arguments, Calvin resorts to two methods. The first is the inseparability of the Divine attributes. According to this idea, the idea of separation will result in the absurdity of fragmenting God: "we must say that God as an infinite or endless power which, notwithstanding, is the rule of all righteousness...for it would render God in pieces to make him almighty without being all righteous."⁴⁵ In his *Sermons on Job*, Calvin declares, "Our Lord cannot be more powerful that he is just; his justice and power are inseparable."⁴⁶ In a similar context, when he assails the Sorbonist dogma that ascribes to God absolute power dissociated from justice, Calvin compares the relation between God's power and God's justice to the relation between the sun's light or fire and its heat: "One might more readily take the sun's light from its heat or its heat from its fire than separate

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² *Sermons on Job* 23:1-7. 415.

⁴³ Ibid., 414.

⁴⁴ *Inst.* III.xxii.4, xxiii.2.

⁴⁵ *Sermons on Job* 23:1-7. 415.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 414.

God's power from his justice."⁴⁷ For Calvin, God's power and justice are so closely united together that they cannot be separated. The almighty God without justice is not imaginable. God's power and justice go together. Calvin's God is described as the sovereign ruler over nature and history. Nature displays God's power and justice very well in harmony. The frightening aspects such as storms, lightning, and the shaking of the heavens show God's majestic power: "If natural things always followed in an even and uniform course, the power of God would not be perceptible."⁴⁸ At the same time, we find God's justice when this frightening aspect of nature does not overwhelm or break away the rules and law imposed upon the sea by the hand of God.⁴⁹ Calvin regards the God speaking in the whirlwind as not a tyrannical God, but a God whose goodness and his power are united in harmony.

The second method is to resort to the principle that God is the absolute standard and norm. How can we say that God is just even when God looks so erratic and arbitrary, even when God looks like a ruthless tyrant to predestine some into eternal death by solely his eternal decree before they were born and did nothing good or bad? The answer is that God is the absolute standard and norm. God is the highest rule of justice. Therefore, Calvin, in responding to the attack that the doctrine of double predestination makes God tyranny, argues in a very Scotistic way that whatever God wills, by the very fact that He wills it, must be considered righteous: "For God's will is so much the highest rule of righteousness that whatever he wills, by the very fact that he wills it, must be considered righteous."⁵⁰ For Calvin, the fact that God is not contained in our norm of justice should not be taken to mean that he is unjust. Rather, God's justice *transcends* our standards of justice. God is the greatest norm superior to any other norm we can think about. It is ironic that Calvin who

⁴⁷ CR 8.361, quoted in John T. McNeill, ed. *Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 214 footnote.

⁴⁸ *Comm. on Psalms*, vol. 1, 267.

⁴⁹ *Comm. on Psalms*, vol. 4, 145.

⁵⁰ *Inst.* III.xxiii.2.

refuses the concept of *potentia absoluta* represented by Duns Scotus exactly follows the view of Duns Scotus, as Wendel insists,

Now if God is his own law, that means that he is bound by what he has decided, that his will is immutable but not subject to any external causality; and that is exactly what Duns Scotus meant to convey by his teaching.⁵¹

Calvin used a little Scotistic logic as the instrument to fight against the censure of “the lawless caprice” and vindicate God’s righteousness transcending the law. Therefore, Calvin’s answer for why God has elected some and reprobated others before they were born becomes very simple: it is “because he has willed it.”⁵² Calvin cannot find anything greater or higher than God’s will. We cannot ask why he so willed. Calvin adores God’s exalted will as “cause of causes”, “law of laws” which is abbreviated into one phrase, God’s absolute will. Calvin chooses Paul as his strong supporter in that Paul does not attribute tyranny to God, but commands our silence before his profound judgement, “deeper than the lowest abyss”.⁵³ In this way, Calvin dissolves contradictory elements inherent in the concept of *potentia absoluta* and thus proves the unity of God: a God of power is in harmony with a God of justice.

⁵¹ Wendel, *Calvin*, 129. Unlike Wendel’s view, Doumergue refuses to interpret Calvin’s as the successor of Duns Scotus: “Calvin is no disciple of Duns Scotus. His God is not one of lawless caprice; therefore it must not be said that for Calvin, as Duns Scotus, everything that God does is just for the sole reason that he does it.” See Emile Doumergue, *Jean Calvin, les hommes et les choses de son temps*, vol. IV (Lausanne, 1899-1917; Neuilly, 1926-7), 119. Wendel and Butin introduce two streams of Calvin’s God in terms of Duns Scotus. One stream to depict Calvin’s God as the successor to that of the Scotist and the other stream to depict Calvin’s God as the one to refuse that of Scotist. See Wendel, *Calvin*, 171ff.; Philip Walker Butin, *Revelation, Redemption, and Response* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 13-14

⁵² *Inst.* III.xxiii.2.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

2) Against ‘God with Two Different Wills’

As in Luther, the relation between God hidden and revealed converges on the core matter of “two different wills”, or “two contrary wills”. Brunner states that, in comparison with Luther, “Calvin does not make Luther’s distinction—which Luther feels to be so important—between the ‘hidden’ and the ‘revealed’ will of God if he does think of it, he takes a quite different view.”⁵⁴ However, on the contrary, Calvin, in his *Commentary on II Peter* 3:9, clearly distinguishes between the hidden will of predestination and the revealed will in the gospel that God wishes none to perish.

But it may be asked, if God wishes none to perish, why is it that so many do perish? To this my answer is, that no mention is here made of *the hidden purpose* of God, according to which the reprobate are doomed to their own ruin, but *only of his will as made known to us in the gospel*.⁵⁵

Again, in his *Commentary on Matt.* 23:37 where Jesus cries out, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who killed the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing”, Calvin distinguishes God’s two wills as Luther did—one hidden will and the other revealed will, asserting that “it [God’s will to gather all to himself] is not, therefore, the secret purpose of God, but his will, which is manifested by the nature of the word.”⁵⁶ Besides, in *Commentary on Jonah* 3:10 and *Zephaniah* 3:7, this distinction continues.

T.H.L. Parker indicates that Calvin was attacked in his own day for positing two wills

⁵⁴ Brunner, *Dogmatics*, vol. I, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 325.

⁵⁵ *Comm. on II Peter* 3:9. [Italics mine]

⁵⁶ *Comm. on Matt.* 23:37.

in God, one revealed in the Law and the Gospel, the other kept hidden from people.⁵⁷ The opponents emphasise the conflict between God hidden and revealed by insisting, “By his secret will he decrees what he has openly forbidden by law.”⁵⁸ They estimate that this conflict is due to “two contrary wills”.⁵⁹ Here it is obvious that, while “law” refers to God’s revealed will, “his secret will” refers to Hiddenness II, the area of “more than what God has revealed”.⁶⁰ Above all, Calvin’s matter of “two wills” is deeply intertwined with his double predestination, where God, through the double decree, withholds from what he seems to offer to all.⁶¹ The matter is that this idea of double predestination is contrasted with the idea of universal love represented in the Bible. Calvin clearly contrasts God’s universal will to save all, with his hidden purpose to doom the reprobate to their own ruin. Besides, Calvin knows too well the matter of a double will surrounding predestination: “But, it is alleged, we thereby ascribe a *double will* to God, whereas he is not variable and not the least shadow of turning falls upon Him.” Calvin’s distinction between God’s secret counsel and his benevolent will revealed in the Bible reminds us of a serious question, “Even though I believe in Christ, who knows whether the Father is gracious to me?” which Luther criticized.⁶² Here the conflict between God’s secret counsel and God’s revealed will—the matter of two different wills—throws the inexplicable theological puzzle to the theological world. Human natural reason finds a serious contradiction between the relentless God of predestination and the benevolent God of universal love in the Bible, who “makes his sun rise on good and evil” [Matt. 5:45]. This is one of Calvin’s deep theological burdens. In the *Institutes*, he introduces the opinions of some who question his view on predestination: “God would be contrary to himself if he should universally invite

⁵⁷ T.H.L. Parker, *Calvin: An Introduction to His Thought* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1995), 47.

⁵⁸ *Inst.* I.xviii.3.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ *Comm. on Rom.* xi.35.

⁶¹ *Inst.* III.iii.21; xxii.10; xxiv.1-2, 8, 15-17.

⁶² *LW* 24.157. (John 14:23)

all men to him but admit only a few as elect.”⁶³ Appealing to the above passages of Calvin’s *Commentary on II Peter* 3:9, Amyraut claims that Calvin supports the idea of two different wills of God. Pighius, Calvin’s great critic, throws a sharp question to Calvin: “How can God be just in showing mercy to some and in hardening others according to his will?”⁶⁴ He comments that the Lord’s command to preach the Gospel universally conflicts the doctrine of special election: “That Christ, the Redeemer of the whole world, commands the Gospel to be preached promiscuously to all does not seem congruent with special election.”⁶⁵ Besides, Calvin’s adversaries accuse his doctrine of predestination of making God show “partiality towards persons”.⁶⁶ They maintain that predestination is the representation of God’s “biased justice” in that “in his predestination he does not maintain the same attitude toward all.” Their request is that “if he finds all guilty, let him punish all equally; if innocent, let him withhold the rigor of his judgement from all.”⁶⁷ In a word, they argue that God is not fair.

What is Calvin’s response? How does Calvin react to the idea of two different wills represented in God’s universal love and special election? Calvin’s answer is simple: though his universal love and decree of election look contradictory, there is no contradiction, but rather full harmony. He tries to find a harmonizing point through his logical persuasion. His conviction about harmony is vividly represented in his *Commentary on I Tim* 2:4-6.

Hence we see *the childish folly* of those who represent this passage to be opposed to predestination. “If God” say they, “wishes all men indiscriminately to be saved, it is false that some are predestined by his eternal purpose to salvation, and others to perdition.”

They might have had some ground for saying this, if Paul were speaking here about

⁶³ *Inst.* III.xxii.10. Cf. Melachthon’s letter to Calvin, May 11, 1543 (CR XI. 541; Herminjard, *Correspondance* VIII. 343.f)

⁶⁴ L.F. Schulze, *Calvin’s Reply to Pighius* (Pro Rege-press: Potchefstroom, 1971), 120. Calvin regarded the views of Pighius as a menace to the church and that the remedy should be promptly administered. His refutation of Pighius’ book written in haste appeared in February 1543 in Geneva.

⁶⁵ *Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God*, 102

⁶⁶ *Inst.* III.xxiii.10.

individual men; although even then we should not have wanted the means of replying to their argument; for, although the will of God ought not to be judged from his secret decrees, when he reveals them to us by outward signs, yet it does not therefore follow that he has not determined with himself what he intends to do as to every individual man.⁶⁸

Here Calvin avers that it is “*the childish folly*” to find some opposition between God’s predestination and God’s universal love that invites all to salvation. Calvin tries to prove why it is “*the childish folly*” in a logical way. In *Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God*, Calvin strives to prove that God’s universal invitation of all to life and repentance by his Word “is *not contradictory* of His secret counsel, by which He determined to convert none but His elect.”⁶⁹ Calvin attempts to gather all theological logic to pursue the harmony between God’s hidden and revealed will. Above all, Calvin believes that Scripture supports this *reconciliation* of these two notions: “I have elsewhere explained how Scripture *reconciles* the two notions that all are called to repentance and faith by outward preaching, yet the spirit of repentance and faith is not given to all.”⁷⁰ More concretely, Calvin’s logic to reconcile both concepts is as follows.

First, Calvin distinguishes between “irrevocable decree” and “conditional decree”. God’s eternal decree to choose some to salvation and condemn others to eternal condemnation belongs to God’s irrevocable decision. God, by his eternal good will, which has no cause outside itself, destined those whom he pleased to salvation, rejecting the rest. There is no possibility that human efforts can alter this change. However, all God’s will should not be regarded as irrevocable. Calvin takes the example of the Ninevites. To them, God declared that he would do what in fact he was not going to. Though the denunciation sounded like an irrevocable decree, in fact, Calvin points out that it was conditional—not

⁶⁷ *Inst.* III.xxiii.11.

⁶⁸ *Comm. on I Tim.* 2:4.

⁶⁹ *Concerning the eternal Predestination of God*, 106 [Italics mine]

⁷⁰ *Inst.* III.xxii.10. [Italics mine]

firmly decreed unless they remained obstinate. Likewise, when God says that I will all to be saved or I do not will the death of a sinner, it should not necessarily be regarded as an irrevocable decree, but as a conditional decree used for exhorting people to faith and repentance where “the mutual relation between threats and promise shows such forms of speech to be *conditional*.”⁷¹ For Calvin, it is natural that the conditional decree and unconditional decree can be harmonized without collision.

Second, Calvin makes use of the distinction between universal invitation and effective calling. Calvin basically understands that both can stand together. God invites all to repentance and salvation by His Word, but chooses only some. Calvin finds no contradiction. Therefore he declares:

The statement of Christ “Many are called but few are chosen” [Matt. 22:14] is in this manner, very badly understood. *Nothing will be ambiguous* if we hold fast to what ought to be clear from the foregoing: that there are two kinds of all.⁷²

In other place, Calvin clearly affirms, “Now this is *not contradictory* of His secret council, by which he determined to convert none but His elect.”⁷³ Calvin recognizes that “the world is reconciled to God (II Cor. 5.18) and “Christ was ordained for the salvation of the whole world.” He continues to say “All are equally called to penitence and faith; the same mediator is set forth to reconcile them to the Father—so much is evident.”⁷⁴ However, Calvin’s universal traits just finish here. In the next step, Calvin proceeds to salvation limited by predestination. Though all are called to penitence and faith, only those who are elected will answer to the call because “the greater part remains unbelieving because God honors with illumination none but those whom He will.”⁷⁵ On one level, God calls all to

⁷¹ *Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God*, 105.

⁷² *Inst.* III.xxiv.8

⁷³ *Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God*, 106.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 102-3.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 103.

life with the external doctrine of life. But on another level, only those whom He dignified by gratuitous adoption, God illuminated by His Spirit, so that they receive the life offered in Christ, while others voluntarily disbelieve, so that they remain in darkness destitute of the light of faith.⁷⁶ For our easy understanding, Calvin uses vivid language to express the difference: “God...*stretches forth his hand* without a difference to all, but *lays hold only* of those, to lead them to himself, whom he has chosen before the foundation of the world.”⁷⁷ Logically, the act of *stretching forth his hand* can coexist with the act of *laying hold* without any contradiction. In a word, mercy of God is offered equally to both kinds of men, but the elect will receive the grace, through the Divine act of laying hold of them. The reprobate will reject the grace and be rendered “inexcusable” before final judgement. “The Gospel has the power to save all, but not the effect.”⁷⁸

Third, as for the criticism of “partiality towards men”, where grace is denied to some who are quite unworthy, while it is granted to others who are equally unworthy, Calvin vindicates God’s right to partial grace of remission. For this, Calvin borrows from Augustine a human analogy of creditors and debtors. A human creditor is quite entitled to exact a debt from one of his debtors and to remit it in the case of another. This is applied to the relations of God and humanity. God, too, is entitled, since all are his debtors, to remit or to exact as he wills.

Because God metes out merited penalty to those whom he condemns but distributes unmerited grace to those whom he calls, he is freed of all accusation—like a lender, who has the power of remitting payment to one, of exacting it from another. “The Lord can therefore also give grace...to whom he will...because he is merciful, and not give to all because he is a just judge. For by giving to some what they do not deserve...he can show his free grace...By not giving to all, he can manifest what all deserve.”⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Ibid., 11.

⁷⁷ *Comm. on II Peter* 3:9.

⁷⁸ *Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God*, 103.

⁷⁹ *Inst.* III.xxiii.11.

Such a right can be understood as the vindication of God's sovereign power to show his favor to his elect because he wills: "I will show mercy on whom I will show mercy, and I will take pity on whom I will take pity" (Ex. 33:19). Calvin finds that Scripture supports this idea. In Acts 16:6, God forbids Paul to speak the Word in Asia and, turning him aside from Bithynia, draws him into Macedonia. Calvin understands that this clearly shows that God has the right to distribute this treasure to whom he pleases. In Isaiah 8:16, Isaiah proclaims that they alone, not the whole human race without distinction, are to become his disciples, which Calvin understands that "he still more openly shows how he directs the promises of salvation specifically to the elect."⁸⁰

For Calvin, the matter of God's two different wills relates not only to predestination, but also to God's providence. In a sense, some taint of God's two apparently contrary wills pervades all the workings of God's providence in the world. While interpreting Moses' statement that "The secret things belong to the Lord, our Lord, but what is here written to you and your children" (Deut. 29:29), Calvin remarks that "we see how he bids us not only direct our study to meditation upon the law, but to look up to God's secret providence with awe."⁸¹ Here Calvin introduces God's secret providence distinguished from God's law as God's revealed will. Calvin understands that the universe is governed by God's incomprehensible plan. His judgement is a deep abyss. Calvin confesses that "he has *another hidden will* which may be compared to a deep abyss."⁸² For Calvin, the causes of events are often hidden, and consequently human history often seems to be fortuitous and confused. Indeed, Calvin feels that God with "another hidden will [*aliam voluntatem absconditam*]" is working in a "deep abyss".⁸³ Therefore, history looks like the arena where this deep abyss in God's providence is displayed, where it seems that "God is

⁸⁰ *Inst.* III.xxii.9.

⁸¹ *Inst.* I.xvii.2.

⁸² *Ibid.* [Italic mine].

⁸³ *Ibid.*

making sport of men by throwing them like balls.”⁸⁴

What is significant is that, whereas Calvin recognizes the presence of another hidden will in terms of distinction, he denies that there is a real contradiction between the revealed will and hidden will, in terms of relation. Calvin is always ready to defend against opponents’ attacks on God’s double will, when they insist that “if nothing happens apart from God’s will, there are in him two contrary wills, because by his secret plan he decrees what he has openly forbidden by his law.”⁸⁵ To answer, Calvin appeals to the Holy Spirit to ascertain that God decrees by his secret plan what he has openly forbidden by law: “...this cavil is not hurled against me but against the Holy Spirit.”⁸⁶ Calvin’s God does not just foreknow or allow what he wills to be done but decrees it and commands its execution by his ministers. Therefore Calvin declares, “Satan and all the impious are so under God’s hand and power that he directs their malice to whatever end seems good to him, and uses their wicked deeds to carry out his judgements.”⁸⁷ God aroused Pharaoh [Rom 9:17]; then “he hardens whom he pleases” [Rom. 9:18]. Here, it was the secret plan which caused hardening.⁸⁸ In Job, God was the author of the trial of which Satan and the wicked thieves were the ministers, because Job says, “The Lord gave, the Lord has taken away, as it has pleased God, so is it done” [Job 1:21].⁸⁹ Job found God’s just scourge in their unjust acts and evil doing toward him. Eli’s sons did not obey their father because God willed to slay them [1 Sam. 2:25]. In Acts 4:28, Herod and Pilate “conspired to do what the hand and counsel of God determined.” These examples show that Calvin seems to recognize that God decrees by his secret plan what he has openly forbidden by law. However, this does not mean that Calvin accepts God’s two different wills, though he distinguishes between

⁸⁴ *Inst.* I.xvii.1.

⁸⁵ *Inst.* I.xviii.3.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ *Inst.* III.xviii.1.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

God's hidden will and God's revealed will and recognizes the apparent contradiction between them. Calvin does not abolish one will for the other. Calvin assures his opponents that it is God himself who executes what is forbidden by law according to his hidden will. At first sight, Calvin's reference to God as the one who executes his secret plan which looks against law, and thus at the same time wills and does not will the same thing, seems to plunge God into a sinister pit, thus affirming the existence of two different and contrary wills in God. Such an idea could drive God into being the author of a double will. But in this logical predicament, Calvin takes hold of his higher Divine presumption that "God's will is not at war with itself, nor does it change, nor does it pretend not to will what he wills."⁹⁰ Here, Calvin jumps over human logic to belief. This theological view that "God's will is not at war with itself", does not require any proof. Calvin's critical arguments turn into a confession of faith. "If anybody objects that it is absurd to split God's will, I answer that this is exactly *our belief*, that his will is one and undivided."⁹¹

The conclusion that Calvin draws in his whole argument is that the hidden will and the revealed will are not different, but one and the same will. The relation between them is expressed by *one and simple will with a manifold appearance*: "But even though his will is one and simple in him, it appears manifold to us."⁹² Here, Calvin reduces all contrary or different aspects between the hidden will and the revealed will into "manifold appearance". Calvin cites that Paul refers to the calling of the Gentile as "a mystery hidden" [Eph. 3:9], where "God's manifold wisdom" was shown forth [Eph 3:10]. Our presupposition that God contradicts himself is completely wrong: it is just appearance, not reality.

Along with Calvin's appealing to his faith in God who has one and simple will, Calvin ascribes the origin of contradictions to our defective eyes which have no power to

⁹⁰ *Inst.* I.xviii.3.

⁹¹ *Comm. on Matt.*, 23:37, on *Ezek*, 18:23.[Italics mine]

⁹² *Inst.* I.xviii.3.

penetrate the reality behind the apparent contradiction. Calvin describes this as the sluggishness of our understanding.⁹³ It is the sluggishness of our understanding, which makes God's wisdom appear manifold. To our reason, it looks contradictory, but in God's sight, both refer to God's one and the same will. Contradiction is rooted in our mental incapacity, while there is no contradiction in God.

Because God's wisdom appears manifold ought we therefore, on account of the sluggishness of our understanding, to dream that there is any variation in God himself, as if he either many change his plan or disagree with himself? Rather, when we do not grasp how God wills to take place what he forbids to be done, let us recall our mental incapacity.⁹⁴

This mental problem in deciphering God's will is well matched with the metaphor, "the darkness overspreading light" in Calvin's *Commentary on 1 Tim 6:16*. The light in which God dwells is unapproachable because it is overspread with darkness. The darkness prevents us from seeing God as he is. Calvin refers to the darkness as our weak vision in grasping God, which obscures God as he is, as God is hidden in darkness. The weak vision, or rather the dullness of our understanding prevents us from approaching his light.

Who inhabiteth unapproachable light. He means two things, that God is concealed from us, and yet that the cause of obscurity is not in himself, as if he were hidden in darkness, but in ourselves, who, on account of the weak vision, or rather the dullness of our understanding, cannot approach to his light. We must understand that the light of God is unapproachable, if any one endeavor to approach to it in his own strength; for, if God did not open up the entrance to us by his grace, the prophet would not say: "They who draw near to him are enlightened" (Psalms 34:5). Yet it is true that, while we are surrounded by this mortal flesh, we never penetrate so far into the deepest secrets of God as to have nothing hidden from us.⁹⁵

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ *Comm. on 1 Tim. 6:16*.

To sum up, Calvin distinguishes two wills—the revealed will and God’s hidden will. However, this just speaks of distinction, not difference. Calvin’s conclusion is that God has just one and simple will. Only infirmity of our minds cannot take God’s will as it is and thus it appears manifold to us. It is reflected as “double” to our infirm minds: “because our minds cannot plumb the profound depths of his secret election, to suit our infirmity, the will of God is set before us as double.” It is as if we “see through a glass darkly and must be content with the measure of our own intelligence.”⁹⁶ Therefore, Calvin does not attribute the matter of God’s double will to the being of God, but to our capacity to perceive God.

3) Against ‘God Who Changes His Will’

In the Bible, the accommodated God is sometimes said to change his will, but, as we have just seen, Calvin understands that God himself does not change his will. If Calvin approves that God changes his will, it will result in a serious detrimental effect on his theology, because God’s apparent change of will in Scripture is contradicted by the reliable God which is his major premise of his theology. If God changes his will frequently, there cannot be a God of predestination, because predestination is based on the unchanging plan of God before creation. Therefore, Calvin shows deep concern for the issue of “God’s repentance”. In the *Institutes*, I.xvii.12-13, Calvin mentions several examples of God’s repentance or change of the will which his antagonists take against Calvin as the proof that God’s plan does not stand firm and sure: (1) God’s repentance of having created man [Gen. 6:6]; (2) of having put Saul over the kingdom [1Sam. 15:11]; (3) God’s being persuaded from his plan of the imminent destruction of Nineveh by their repentance soon after Jonah

warned them of destruction which will come forty days later; (4) God's being moved by King Hezekiah's tears and prayers to defer his death proclaimed by Isaiah. Against these examples showing God's repentance, Calvin introduces some significant statements as counter evidence that shows God's unchangeableness. The first is Samuel's words to Saul: "The strength of Israel will not lie, nor be turned aside by repentance; for he is not man, that he may repent" [1 Sam. 15:29]. The other is Balaam's words broken into against his will: "God is not like man that he should lie, nor as the son of man he should change. It cannot be that he will not do what he has said or not fulfill what he has spoken" [Num. 23:19]. On this basis, Calvin affirms that there is no change or repentance in God's plan or will: "Therefore, it is certain that God's ordinance in the managing of human affairs is both everlasting and above all repentance."⁹⁷

Calvin understands God's repentance written in the Bible exemplified above as God's accommodation. However, repentance should not be attributed to the God himself because he is not a man so that he can repent [1 Sam. 15:29]. In his *Commentary on Jonah* 3:10, Calvin distinguishes between God himself and the accommodated God in the Word, and attributes God's repentance to the accommodated God in his Word, while he subjects God himself to none of our affections—that is, an impassable and immutable God.

We hence see that there is a twofold view of God, as he sets himself forth in his Word, and as he is as to his hidden counsel. With regard to his secret counsel, I have already said that God is always like himself, and is subject to none of our feelings: but with regard to the teaching of his Word, it is accommodated to our capacities. God is now angry with us, and then, as though he were pacified, he offers pardon, and is propitious to us. Such is the repentance of God. Let us then remember that it proceeds from his Word, that God is said to repent.⁹⁸

⁹⁶ *Comm. on Matt.* 23:37, on *Ezek.* 18:23.

⁹⁷ *Inst.* I.xvii.12.

More definitely, Calvin reveals God's unity between the repenting God and the God who does not repent—the accommodated God and God himself—in his fleeting words during his explanation of God's repentance. What is the relation between the accommodated God and God himself? Calvin's insight into the relation is this:

And we must note that in the same chapter both are joined together that the comparison well harmonizes *the apparent disagreement*. When God repents of having made Saul king, his change of mind is to be taken *figuratively*.⁹⁹

This statement is crucial to our proper understanding of the relation between the accommodated God and God himself: the disagreement is just *apparent*. Calvin indicates that the apparent discrepancy is due to the “figurative” expression.¹⁰⁰ Figurative expression is the key to harmonize these two concepts. In the Bible interpretation, a “figurative” expression should not be understood literally. “Figurative” is like refraction. Remember that a stick in the water looks broken or bent, though in fact it is not. “Figurative” expressions function like water, which refracts things as if they were broken or bent: the figurative expression has some correspondence with reality, but is not the same as reality itself.

In his *Sermons on Job*, Calvin affirms that God has one will which is “constant and invariable”. Calvin blames Job, saying that he ought to have been fully resolved that God is righteous and impartial in all his doings.

God is always *at one point or in one mind*, that is to say, that he is *constant & invariable*, and cannot be turned one way nor other according as we see that even Balaam the liar was enforced to acknowledge that God is not like me, who change their minds and variable

⁹⁸ *Comm. on Jon* 3:10.

⁹⁹ *Inst.* I.xvii.13.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

and inconstant.¹⁰¹

In the end, Calvin comes to the conclusion that God does not change, but looks changing to our perception: “neither God’s plan nor his will is reversed, nor his volition altered; but what he had from eternity foreseen, approved, and decreed, he pursues in uninterrupted tenor, however sudden the variation may appear in men’s eyes.”¹⁰²

4) Against ‘God as the Author of Evil’

Another baffling knot in the theory of God hidden and revealed is the condemnation that God is the author of evil. Calvin’s opponents regard this idea as logical because God is the author of all things. Calvin has no objection to the idea that God is the author of all things. He states, “The will of God is the chief and principal cause of all things.”¹⁰³ Calvin’s hidden God is a sovereign God with absolute providence as the “Author of all things”¹⁰⁴ who declares, “he creates light and darkness, that he forms good or bad” [Isa. 45:7]. Even “nothing evil happens that he himself has not done” [Amos 3:6]. Calvin believes that everything good or bad takes place according to God’s will. Calvin put even evils under his providence. God aroused Pharaoh [Rom 9:17], and then, “he hardens whom he pleases” [Rom. 9:18]. Here Calvin declares, “From this, it follows that God’s secret plan is the cause of hardening.”¹⁰⁵ Taken to the extreme, this idea drives Calvin’s opponents to say that he makes God the author of sin. God cannot condemn people for their reprobation because they are necessarily predestined to eternal death solely by his decision, apart from

¹⁰¹ *Sermons on Job 23:13-17*, 421. [Italics mine]

¹⁰² *Inst.* I.xvii.13.

¹⁰³ *Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God*, 177.

¹⁰⁴ *Inst.* I.xviii.3.

¹⁰⁵ *Inst.* III.xxiii.1.

their own merit.¹⁰⁶ Pighius asks how an earthly judge, by punishing a criminal, can take vengeance on the crime which the provident God has worked? He concludes that this horrible doctrine makes God the author and cause of sin, leaving nothing left of his justice nor of his goodness.¹⁰⁷

Calvin is adamant in his objection, remarking that the idea that God is the author of sin is “an atrocious charge”.¹⁰⁸ Calvin warns that such unwarranted charges could lead simple and inexperienced Christians to “dash against the awful and abhorrent rock of making God the author of sin.”¹⁰⁹ How does Calvin fight against this matter? How does Calvin harmonize the seemingly contradictory statements: “God is the author of all things” and “God is not the author of evil”? How can God be immune and not responsible for evil which is done under His will? If God’s will is the cause of reprobation, can we say that God does not have to object to the disbelief or the sinful actions of those whom he reprobates? Calvin attempts to find several answers for these questions.

First, Calvin asserts that *God is not the initiator of evil*. He emphasises the fact that God created the world good. At first, human nature was created upright. From this, Calvin instructs us that we cannot blame God for the depravity that he contracted.¹¹⁰

Second, “*the proper and genuine cause of sin is not God’s hidden counsel, but the evident will of man.*”¹¹¹ Unless God willed it, the crime would not have been committed. Calvin recognizes this, but argues that it does not excuse the criminal, because his motive is wrong. Strictly speaking, he was not acting in order to obey God’s will, but from some form of selfishness and corrupted nature. In other words, “we should contemplate the evident cause of condemnation in the corrupt nature of humanity—which is closer to us—

¹⁰⁶ *Inst.* III.xxiii.2.

¹⁰⁷ Schulze, *Calvin’s Reply to Pighius*, 41.

¹⁰⁸ *Brief Reply*, in Calvin, *Theological Treatise*, trans. J. K. S. Reid (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1944), 190. See also *Letters*, 2:348-54.

¹⁰⁹ *Brief Reply*, in *Theological Treatise*, 191.

¹¹⁰ *Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God*, 123.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 122.

rather than seek a hidden and utterly incomprehensible cause in God's predestination."¹¹² It is from his own fault that the former heir of life rendered himself subject to the death. It is true that God predestined people to eternal condemnation for his glory,¹¹³ but it is because of their own sin and the rejection of God's grace open to them that the corrupted people brought about their own destruction. Therefore, a man should find the cause of his evil within himself rather than looking round to seek it in heaven. Here Calvin borrows David's praise, "God wills not iniquity" (Ps. 5:5).¹¹⁴

Third, more concretely, in spite of the human will in bondage, Calvin tries not to weaken human responsibility. Rather, as John H. Leith indicates, few people have ever maintained the responsibility of humankind more emphatically than Calvin.¹¹⁵ To support his view, Leith takes as an example that Calvin vigorously asserted human freedom when he was confronted by Spiritual Libertines with the view of pantheistic determinism which made God the author of sin. Of course, like Luther, Calvin regards human will as a bonded will in the sense of an uncoerced will.¹¹⁶ Calvin remarks that "because of the bondage of sin by which the will is held bound, it cannot move toward good, much less apply itself thereto."¹¹⁷ Calvin is consistently reluctant to admit the presence of "free will" in his theological world.¹¹⁸ It is natural that the concept of human bonded will should bring about the matter of human responsibility. To tackle this, Calvin seeks for human responsibility in the concept of *voluntary choice* of the will. According to Calvin, even if our will is fettered by sin and necessity, the voluntariness of the will is still preserved. Therefore, "man, as he was corrupted by the fall, sinned willingly, not unwillingly or by

¹¹² *Inst.* III.xxiii.8.

¹¹³ *Inst.* III.xxii.11.

¹¹⁴ *Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God*, 122.

¹¹⁵ John H. Leith, *John Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life* (Louisville, Kentucky: John Knox Press, 1989), 141.

¹¹⁶ Leith, *John Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life*, 142.

¹¹⁷ *Inst.* II.iii.5.

¹¹⁸ Leith himself admits this point in *John Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life*, 142.

compulsion; by the most eager inclination of his heart, not by forced compulsion.”¹¹⁹ Besides, even God’s providence cannot exclude voluntary choice: “Man falls according as God’s providence orders, but he falls by his own faults.”¹²⁰ Human corruption and God’s providence put humanity under the umbrella of necessity. However, necessity cannot abolish voluntariness. “Man, while he sins of necessity, yet sins no less voluntarily.”¹²¹ Though not positively, Calvin endows human voluntary choice with some characteristic of freedom. Calvin indicates that Bernard, agreeing with Augustine, calls this voluntariness “innate freedom” inherent in will, where the freedom is kept intact, for what is voluntary is also free.¹²² Because of this voluntariness, we, who are the slaves of sin fettered by the necessity of corrupted nature, can be proclaimed as “free”. Therefore, “the soul, in some strange and evil way, under a certain voluntary and wrongly free necessity is at the same time enslaved and free.”¹²³ This voluntary choice is the very ground on which God can condemn us and reprimand even the reprobate who are necessarily to fall into the destruction imposed by God’s secret plan. The fall of Adam is a good case. In this case, we find that Calvin attributes Adam’s responsibility to Adam’s *voluntariness* in his sin.

For we must always remember that he *voluntarily* deprived himself of the rectitude he had received from God, *voluntarily* gave himself to the service of sin and Satan, and *voluntarily* precipitated himself into destruction.¹²⁴

Here the memorable epigram follows: he sins *necessarily*, but at the same time *voluntarily*. “This voluntary transgression”, as Calvin said, “is enough and more than enough to establish his guilt” in spite of the excuse that “he could not evade what God had

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ *Inst.* III.xxiii.8: “*Cadit igitur homo, Dei proidentia sic ordinante: sed suo vitio cadit.*”

¹²¹ *Inst.* II.iv.1.

¹²² *Inst.* II.iii.5.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ *Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God*, 122.

decreed.”¹²⁵ Even if we do something under the coercing force, if he can choose it voluntarily, this freedom of voluntariness brings about responsibility for what he did. Therefore, we need to distinguish between the “freedom from coercing force” and “freedom of voluntary choice.” As for the human will, Calvin is one with Luther in rejecting the former freedom, but relying on the latter freedom. In history, God’s providence and human freedom are two strands intertwined in a mysterious way. They are harmonious in paradoxical tension. Calvin is reluctant to lose one for the other. In his theology, both are essential because one strand contributes to our praising God’s glory and grace; the other strand makes us responsible for what we do.

Fourth, *God uses the instrument of human evil for his righteous purpose*. When Absalom committed adultery with his father’s wives [II Sam. 16:22], God willed to punish David’s adultery with this shameful act. When Job had been robbed by thieves, in their unjust acts and evil doing toward him, he recognized God’s just scourge. Robbers stole the cattle of the saintly Job out of their wicked desire. However, Job understood that “God took away by the hands of plunderers what was none the less taken by His consent and authority.”¹²⁶ Calvin understands that God used them as the instrument of trial: “God was the author of all trials of which Satan and his wicked thieves were minister.” Additionally, Judas who betrayed according to his wicked will, nevertheless performed God’s righteous plan for redemption, that his Son be delivered up to death. Calvin’s God holds the key in whatever men and Satan himself may instigate, so that “he directs their malice to whatever end seems good to him, and uses their wicked deeds to carry out his judgements.”¹²⁷ However, even though God accomplishes through the wicked what he has decreed by his secret judgement, God cannot be condemned, because God uses their evil for his

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 180.

¹²⁷ *Inst.* I.xviii.1.

righteousness. At the same time, they cannot be excusable because they deliberately break God's law out of their own lust.

We ought, indeed, to hold fast by this: while God accomplishes through the wicked what he has decreed by his secret judgement, they are not excusable, as if they had obeyed his precept which out of their own lust they deliberately break.¹²⁸

A most brilliant example Calvin uses to justify God's using the evil for his righteous purpose is that of sunshine on a corpse. Calvin uses this example to vindicate God's innocence in using human evil for his righteousness.

And whence, I ask you, comes the stench of a corpse, which is both putrefied and laid open by the heat of the sun? All men see that it is stirred up by the sun's ray; yet no one for this reason says that the rays stink.¹²⁹

Here, the sun refers to God. Calvin's logic is that like the sun, God just uses a wicked man's service by shedding his ray, but God is innocent as the sun's rays are clean and pure. Only the corpse-like human nature is responsible for the evil.

Fifth, *God makes good out of evil*. This is Calvin's overall perspective of God's providence in history. Calvin recognizes that "the will of God is the necessity of all things."¹³⁰ Evil, including Adam's fall, was in the will of God. God's hidden hands work in what evil people commit. Adam's fall was caused by Adam's own evil desire and thus Adam is fully responsible. However, at a deeper level, it was in God's secret plan before creation. How can the righteous God predestine Adam's fall in his secret plan? Is not Adam a sacrifice to God's plan? Calvin's opponents ask, "Why should God impute those things to

¹²⁸ *Inst.* I.xviii.4.

¹²⁹ *Inst.* I.xvii.5.

¹³⁰ *Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God*, 177.

men as sin, the necessity of which he has imposed by his predestination?”¹³¹ For this question, Calvin asks us to have a wider perspective on God’s providence: *God makes good out of evil*. Paradoxically, God wills no sin or evil, but sin or evil cannot be done without his will. The thieves’ attack on Job broke the law, but it was also the performance of God’s just scourge. This complex relation between human evil and God’s providence is expressed in a concise aphorism: “God wills for good what men will for evil.”¹³² Calvin praises “the wonderful and ineffable way” that “what is done against His will is not yet done beyond His will.”¹³³ Through this miraculous way God works, “Whatever things are done wrongly and unjustly by man, these very things are the right and just works of God.”¹³⁴ God not only foreknows but also predestines Adam’s fall. Though God foreknows that Adam would fall, and that evil would arise out of his good creation, at the same time, God knows how to make good out of this evil. God regards it as more appropriate to his omnipotent goodness to effect this good than not to allow evil at all. Then how is it possible for our evil to be used for God’s good purpose? To answer this question, Calvin refers to a way that is mysterious and beyond our comprehension. Calvin speaks of God’s omnipotence to make his will be done even while people act against his will, citing Augustine:

‘Sometimes with a good will a man wills something which God does not will...For through the bad wills of evil men God fulfills what he righteously wills.’ A little before he had said that by their defection the apostate angels and all the wicked, from their point of view, had done what God did not will, *but from the point of view of God’s omnipotence* they could in no way have done this, because while they act against God’s will, his will is done upon them.¹³⁵

¹³¹ *Inst.* III.xxiii.6.

¹³² *Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God*, 182.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 182.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 169.

¹³⁵ *Inst.* I.xviii.3.

Sixth, *Calvin resorts to his view of God as the highest rule of righteousness.* According to this, God cannot do anything wrong, for “the will of God is not only free of all fault but is the highest rule of perfection, and even the law of all laws.”¹³⁶ God’s will is so much the highest rule of righteousness that what he wills, by the very fact that he wills it, must be considered righteous. It is not proper and sensible to find something greater and higher than God’s will.¹³⁷ Therefore, it seems that although God mysteriously participates in world evil and human sin, not passively, but in an active way for his providential righteousness, we should not condemn him as the author of sin.

Seventh, Calvin appeals to the contextual interpretation of the Biblical passage to fight against fanatics’ torturing cavil. According to them, Isaiah 45:7 which describes God as the one who “forms the light and creates darkness, brings peace and create evil” shows that God is a God of evil. However, Calvin argues that though apparently this passage seems to attest that God is the author of evil, he urges them to notice the structure of “the contrast”. Calvin argues that if the prophet contrasted the word “righteousness” with the word “evil”, there would be some plausibility in their reasoning. However, the word “evil” is contrasted with peace, not “righteousness”. Thus, the word “evil” should be interpreted to refer to “afflictions, wars, and other adverse occurrences.” Thus Calvin concludes, “God is the author of the ‘evil’ of punishment, but not of the ‘evil’ of guilt.”¹³⁸

Finally, *Calvin indicates the limitation of fleshly ideas.* He understands that the idea that God is the author of sin is an idea of the flesh. The flesh cannot judge the secret decision of God properly and leads us to impiety and sacrilege. God’s justice is hidden in semblance of sin and evil. Though God hardens Pharaoh’s heart, we should not regard God as the author of evil. Rather we should get over our fleshly perception and be wise enough

¹³⁶ *Inst.* III.xxiii.2.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

¹³⁸ *Comm. on Isa.* 45:7.

to look at the marvelous way God works to use iniquity to accomplish his righteous purpose. We should stop all our arguments before God's awesome sovereignty. It is right for us to kneel and admire in humility the incomprehensible judgement of God, which is beyond our examination (Rom. 11:33; 3:5).

5) Against 'God as an Unjust and Unreliable Judge'

More intensely than Luther, Calvin pursues the matter of justice between God hidden and revealed. Especially, in relation to predestination, people inquire about God's justice, saying, "Why from the beginning did God predestine some to death who, since they did not yet exist, could not yet have deserved the judgement of death?"¹³⁹ Is it just for God to decide a person's eternal destination to eternal bliss or to eternal perdition before he or she was born and did nothing right or wrong? Calvin's *Sermons on Job* can be read as the book to support God as a "just and reliable judge". For this purpose, Calvin introduces the matter of "double justice". Susan Schreiner aptly indicates that this double justice is related to a peculiar hiddenness: its hiddenness lies not so much "beyond Christ" as "beyond the Law".¹⁴⁰ She finds this concept to be Calvin's "hermeneutical key" to the book of Job as a whole.¹⁴¹ It is in the *Sermons on Job* that Calvin provides some substantial understanding of God's "double justice". Here, Calvin lets us catch a glimpse of the relation between God himself and the accommodated God through the concept of "double justice of God".

According to Calvin, in the world, there are so many absurd and unreasonable things. We see sometimes God smite and torment a whole city or country with no notable faults, and even some virtue in them. All is put to the fire and sword, even the little babies in

¹³⁹ *Inst.* III.xxi.1. Here Calvin cites Augustine, *Unfinished treatise Against Julian* I. xlviii; II. Viii. (MPL 45.1069f., 1145).

¹⁴⁰ Schreiner, *Where Shall Wisdom Be Found?* 119.

¹⁴¹ Susan E. Schreiner, "Exegesis of Double Justice in Calvin's *Sermons on Job*", *Church History* 58 (1989):

whom nothing was to be seen but innocence.¹⁴² This leads people to fall into the skepticism about God's justice. Job's cynical statement points out, "He [God] destroys both the blameless and the wicked (Job 9:22)."

This matter induces a myriad of questions. Why does God punish innocent children? Why does God punish both the righteous and the wicked? As Abraham argues with God about to destroy all the people in Sodom and Gomorrah, "Far it be from you to do such a thing—to kill the righteous with the wicked, treating the righteous and the wicked alike. Far be it from you! Will not the Judge of all the earth do right" (Gen 18:25)? Does God who destroys both the righteous and the wicked look like a God deficient in moral consciousness and prudence? What kind of justice does this God have? Is it not a justice completely against the justice he revealed in the law?

This is the very place that Job argues with his Creator. His first daring and agonizing issue is: "He would crush me with a storm and multiply my wounds *without cause*" (Job 9:17). Calvin focusses on Job's word "*without cause*". Why does God utter "all his anger and wrath against him" though he is sure that he did nothing wrong to invite such a dreadful punishment? This is the key question. Calvin writes, "Thus you see what Job meant by saying that he was wounded *without causes*: that is to say, as if a man should have demanded of him, knowest thou any evident cause in thy self why God punisheth thee? I see none."¹⁴³ Calvin points out that it seems that God decided to smite him and pour all wrath of wine on him as if he were a terrible wicked man who should be punished more than other men. Does not God spare many wicked men? Job could not see what purpose God had in this horrible travail, any special cause why God punished him so.¹⁴⁴

To tackle this serious question, Calvin introduces the double justice of God as a theological tool:

322-338, at 322.

¹⁴² *Sermons on Job* 9:16-22, 163.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

But there is another kind of justice which is more strange to us; namely, if God were to treat us not according to the law but according as he can just act. The reason? When the Lord gives us his lesson in the Law and commands us to do what it contains (although that surmounts our powers and no mortal man would be able to accomplish what God commands), nevertheless, we will owe more and be obliged to him. The Law is not so perfect or exquisite as is that infinite justice [*iustice infinie*] of God ...according to which he could find iniquity in his angels and the sun would be unclean before him. See, then, how there is a justice more perfect than the Law. If one accomplished everything in the Law, he could still be condemned if God wanted to use this justice. True, the Lord does not wish to use it since he accommodates himself to us and receives and accepts that justice which he has commanded.¹⁴⁵

Here Calvin introduces two kinds of justice. First, there is a secret and hidden justice which reflects God's perfect majesty. It surpasses and transcends the Law. This justice is well expressed in Job 4:17-20, which Calvin cites in the *Institutes*: "Shall a man be justified in comparison with God? Or shall he be purer than his maker? Behold, they that serve him are not faithful and even in his angels he finds wickedness. How much more shall those who dwell in houses of clay, who have an earthly foundation, be consumed before the moth."¹⁴⁶ Furthermore, he uses Job 4:18 to show that even the unfallen angels needed a mediator before they could be joined fully to God.¹⁴⁷ The angels are found "perverse" and "heavens are not clean in his sight." Here Calvin emphasises a great ravine and valley between "creaturely justice" and "Divine justice".¹⁴⁸ Created justice is not perfect enough to satisfy his secret justice.¹⁴⁹ All creatures including angels share a common creaturely justice. However, this creature justice is like "smoke before the infinite majesty of God".¹⁵⁰ According to Calvin's interpretation of Job, even good angels are full

¹⁴⁵ *Sermons on Job* 23:1-7, 413.

¹⁴⁶ *Inst.* III.xii.1.

¹⁴⁷ *Comm. on Col.* 1:20.

¹⁴⁸ *Inst.* III.xii.1.

¹⁴⁹ *Sermons on Job* 23:1-7, 413.

¹⁵⁰ Schreiner, *Where Shall Wisdom Be Found?* 112. Cf. *CO* 33:495-496 (*Sermons on Job*)

of vanity and incapable of withstanding the severity of God's secret justice. Angelic perfection is still only "accepted" by God insofar as God is "content" with the lower and ordinary justice revealed in the Law.¹⁵¹ God's law represented in the Pentateuch shows this point very sharply. God allowed the people to eat flesh in the wilderness. He permitted husbands to give a bill of divorce to their wives, and even to have several wives at the same time. God seems to concede many things that he does not approve. We cannot say that these laws satisfy God's higher justice. Calvin declares, "Nevertheless such permission did not make it right for them to eat flesh, or free them of blame for divorce and polygamy."¹⁵² This permission is not the perfect reflection of God's righteousness, but God's concession for accommodating to human sinfulness and barbarity. God's apparently too easy pardon with too much clemency is based on the fact that "he designedly deviated from the more perfect rule, because he had to do with an intractable people."¹⁵³ For Calvin, God accommodating justice to his creature is like a pitiful father accommodating to the iniquity of his children.

True it is that forso much as we do amiss, we have not so much as were requisite: nevertheless God lays not our infirmities and sins to our charge, but shuts his eyes at them, like as a father is not too inquisitive of his own child, and although he see well enough the faults that are in him, yet he bears with them. Even after the same manner does God work towards us, for he uses the same pitifulness in forgiving all the infirmities wherethrough we do amiss.¹⁵⁴

This concept of double justice is very useful concept to vindicate God's righteousness in the seemingly incomprehensible and mysterious question surrounding God's justice. Why does God destroy both the blameless and the wicked? Why does God confound them?

¹⁵¹ Ibid. Cf. CO 33:205-207, 457-459, 633, 643, 726; CO 34:96, 337. (Sermons on Job)

¹⁵² *Comm. on Num.* 2:1.

¹⁵³ *Comm. on Exod.* 21:18-19.

¹⁵⁴ *Sermons on Job* 23:1-7, 413.

Here Calvin uses these two kinds of justice to conclude that the righteous and the wicked are distinction only to our perception, but both are terrible sinners before God's secret and hidden justice.

Lord (says he [Abrahm]) it is not seemly that you should destroy the righteous with the unrighteous: that is impossible. How is it then that Job speaks so. We must always hold this ground, that Job does not here take the righteous and unrighteous, as they be found to be before God. For where is the righteous when we come there. But he taketh righteous and unrighteous according to our perceiving. Ye see then that a man shall be righteous, that is to say, he shall lead a good and honest life, he shall walk in the fear of God, and in all pureness and soundness with his neighbours: and yet when he comes before the heavenly Throne, the thing that we see not must needs be discovered there.¹⁵⁵

The relation between these two justices is summed up into “*apparent contradiction, but inner unity*”. Our fleshly reason blasphemes God for his unfairness. God's judgement looks strange and seems to have lost justice. This justice seems completely contradictory to the revealed creaturely justice. It appears that while the revealed creaturely justice distinguishes between the righteous and the wicked, the secret and higher justice confounds them. Our perception just sees a sheer contradiction between them. However, even when we see God's justice look “unjust and unrightful”, and further “the flat contrary”, Calvin urges us to think “God's will cannot be otherwise than just and rightful.”¹⁵⁶ For Calvin, the contradiction is just within our limited eyesight, which “is held within bounds and can see no further than this world.”¹⁵⁷ We cannot attain so high as to realize the higher justice of majestic God in heaven. However, in fact, we should know that God never lose his justice— secret and higher justice. Therefore, “although it [God's justice] be hidden, and overcast with dark and thick clouds: yet must we believe that there

¹⁵⁵ *Sermons on Job* 9:16-22, 164.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

is nothing but right and indifference in it. To the seeming of our natural reason we find no justice in God, but rather his justice is as it were transformed into unrighteousness. However, we must glorify him nevertheless.”¹⁵⁸ We should confess that his judgements are so deep a sea as we cannot find them. Calvin demands us to hold it for a sure principle, that “God continues evermore righteous, notwithstanding that he seems to deal *crookedly and overthwartly*.”¹⁵⁹ It is impossible for us to know the reason of God’s works. We cannot mount so high. However, Calvin assures us that even if God’s justice is not known to us,¹⁶⁰ and thus God seems to confound all together, and our imagination avers that God punishes the righteous and unrighteous together, and surmises that God works without reason, we should not cease to acknowledge and confess that he is righteous and unblameable in all points and all respects, and that it behooves us to honour him, glorify him, and humble ourselves.¹⁶¹

Calvin rejects any effort to connect God’s secret and higher justice with God’s absolute power. In Chapter nine of Job, we find several daring remarks of Job which suggest God’s absolute power: “If he snatches away, who can stop him? Who can say to him, what are you doing?...If it is a matter of strength, he is mighty! If it is a matter of justice, who will summon him” (Job 9:12-22)? Above all, Job’s remark in 23:13 is a decisive clue: “Who can oppose him? He does whatever he pleases.” Job believed that the God of absolute power is free to ignore the established order of law by his sovereign power with absolute freedom. Calvin rebukes Job, saying, “he (Job) surmises a lawless power that had neither rule nor measure with it, wherein he doth God wrong.”¹⁶² “Job did amiss in imagining that God used a lawless power.”¹⁶³ For Calvin, “although God’s power is

¹⁵⁸ *Sermons on Job* 9:16-22, 163.

¹⁵⁹ *Sermons on Job* 23:8-12, 418.

¹⁶⁰ *Inst.* III.xxiii.3.

¹⁶¹ *Sermons on Job* 9: 16-22, 165; 23:8-12, 418.

¹⁶² *Sermons on Job* 23:13-17, 421.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 422.

infinite, yet notwithstanding, to imagine it to be so absolute and lawless is as much as to make him a Tyrant.”¹⁶⁴ As we examined before, Calvin finds his logical ground to oppose this idea in God’s inseparable attributes. God’s attribute of power cannot be separated from his justice. “For our Lord will not use might without right, neither is he less rightful than mighty: his rightfulness and mightiness are things inseparable.”¹⁶⁵ This idea of God’s inseparable attributes is the firm string to tie together double justice in harmony. Calvin has a never changing conviction that God is both sovereign and totally righteous and reliable. Therefore, Calvin wants to remind us of Elihu’s words, “It is unthinkable that God would do wrong that the Almighty would pervert justice.”¹⁶⁶

Calvin understands that creaturely justice and secret and higher justice are in balanced tension. The key to this tension in their relation is well represented by the concept of “theoretical possibility and practical possibility”. What Calvin tries to posit is not “alternatives” but “coexistence in balanced tension”. This distinction is essential in our understanding God’s double justice. What Calvin tries to say can be summarized as a brief sentence: “God *could* judge and punish Job according to his higher secret justice”,¹⁶⁷ but in fact he does not act according to “higher secret justice” but to “the created justice”. Here the fact that God “*could* judge...” shows the theoretical possibility presented by God’s sovereignty and infinite freedom. However, the fact that God does not act according to “higher secret justice” shows God’s practical possibility represented by God’s love and trustworthiness.

Through this balanced tension of two different possibilities, Calvin endeavors to harmonize God’s sovereign freedom and God’s love. In the theoretical area, God’s freedom transcends all authority, even his law, however, still not violating its higher secret justice.

¹⁶⁴ *Sermons on Job* 23:1-7, 413-4.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 414.

¹⁶⁶ *Job* 34:12.

¹⁶⁷ *Sermons on Job* 23:1-7, 413.

This freedom makes God free of any condemnation on his judgement based on the higher justice. However, in the practical area, God's endless freedom is limited by his mercy and love for his effort to accommodate himself to the level of the revealed and created law. In the theoretical area, God's freedom is completely reserved, and in the practical area, God's love and trustworthiness are perfectly represented.

Therefore, Calvin argues that when we see God hiding his face, we should not have to presume that God has a different sinister will for us. In confrontation with the incomprehensible hidden God, which drives us to be lost in ambiguity between trust and doubt, faith and despair, Calvin's consistent message is that both justices belong to one and the same God. They are in harmony. The only difference is that one justice is in our comprehension, and the other justice is beyond our comprehension. As Calvin's Job intends to say, "We must not measure God's righteousness by the righteousness of men."¹⁶⁸ Therefore, even when the "clouds", "mist", or "darkness" of hidden God makes us dubious of his justice and trustworthiness, the faithful must soar over those obstacles, and finally reach the broader perspective of the Divine justice and wisdom of God.

3. Christ as God's Unity

For Calvin, the principle of the unity of God hidden and revealed is based on his Christology. Calvin has a firm and strong Christocentrism to join multifarious aspects of God— God in the Old Testament and God in the Gospel, God in heaven and the God who appeared on earth, and ultimately, God hidden and God revealed. "All theology, separated from Christ, is not only vain, but is also mad, deceitful, and spurious; for, though the philosophers sometimes utter excellent sayings, yet they have nothing but what is short-

¹⁶⁸ *Sermons on Job* 9:16-22, 161.

lived and even mixed up with wicked and erroneous statements.”¹⁶⁹

Calvin is tireless in emphasizing Christ as the only way to the true knowledge of God. God reveals himself to us in Jesus Christ. “All thinking about God apart from Christ is a vast abyss which immediately swallows up our perception.”¹⁷⁰ Apart from God manifested in the flesh the Father would remain hidden from us in glory. God reveals himself only through Christ: “never did God reveal himself outside of Christ.”¹⁷¹ In his *Commentary on Col. 1:15*, where Christ is called the “image of the invisible God”, Calvin calls Christ a mirror to reflect God: “God in himself, that is, in his naked majesty, is invisible, and that not to the eyes of the body only, but also to the minds of men, and that he is revealed to us in Christ alone, that we may behold him as a mirror.”¹⁷² God has manifested Himself to us fully and perfectly in Christ.¹⁷³ Whoever is not satisfied with Christ alone, strives after something beyond absolute perfection.¹⁷⁴ In a word, any true knowledge of God cannot be expected apart from Christ.¹⁷⁵

Christ is the only ladder to God in heaven. In his *Commentary on Gen. 28:12*, Calvin declares, “It is Christ alone who joins heaven to earth.”¹⁷⁶ Calvin comments that the ladder which Jacob saw in dream is the symbol of Christ. Human beings are separated from God by sin. There is a great gulf between God and us that “we should flee from him, believing him to be hostile to us.” Christ plays the role of mediator, reaching from heaven to earth. “He it is through whom the fullness of all heavenly gifts flows down to us and through whom we on our part may ascend to God.”¹⁷⁷ Christ is the only way to God. “That man is

¹⁶⁹ *Comm. on John 14:6*.

¹⁷⁰ *Comm. on 1 Pet. 1:20*.

¹⁷¹ *Comm. on John 5:23*. Similarly, Calvin states in *Comm. on Heb. 1:3*, “God is revealed to us in no other way than in Christ... While God is incomprehensible to us in Himself, yet His form appears to us in the Son.”

¹⁷² *Comm. on Col. 1:15*.

¹⁷³ *Comm. on Col. 2:9*. See also *Comm. on 1 Pet. 1:2*: “In Christ, God communicated Himself to us wholly.”

¹⁷⁴ *Comm. on John 14:6*. See also *Comm. on 1 Pet. 1:2*: “they who imagine God in His naked majesty apart from Christ have an idol in place of God.”

¹⁷⁵ *Comm. on Col. 2:3*.

¹⁷⁶ *Comm. on Gen. 28:12*.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

ignorant of Christ who is not led by Him to the Father and who does not in Him embrace God wholly.”¹⁷⁸ Therefore, Calvin urges us to “fix our eyes first on him”, convinced that “he descended to us so that our faith, starting with him, might ascend to the Father.”¹⁷⁹

Calvin declares that Christ as the source of all revelation as “one and the same with God”.¹⁸⁰ He is of one essence with the Father,¹⁸¹ and “Himself the eternal and essential Word of the Father.”¹⁸² He is the cause of all things and works with the Father from the beginning of the world. Christ participated in Father’s creation of the world.¹⁸³ The hidden God and the revealed God are one and the same God. The God of predestination is no other than the God of redemption. Christ is introduced as not only the accommodated God, but also “God himself”,¹⁸⁴ as a naked God who was dreaded by sinners.

There is in the name which he mentions, the Son of God, such majesty as ought to constrain us to fear and obey him. But were we to contemplate nothing but this in Christ, our consciences would not be pacified; for who of us does not dread the sight of the Son of God, especially when we consider what our condition is, and when our sins come to mind?¹⁸⁵

In particular, Calvin emphasises Christ’s participation in God’s hidden counsel to strengthen the unity of God’s will. God’s deepest hiddenness is referred to as God’s hidden secret counsel of double predestination. It seems that the secret and hidden counsel is totally contrary to God’s benevolent will to call everybody to salvation, which was shown in Calvin’s own words: “Is not the one calling everyone to salvation a different God from

¹⁷⁸ *Comm. on 1 Col. 2:2.*

¹⁷⁹ *Comm. on John 14:1.*

¹⁸⁰ *Inst. I.xiii.7.*

¹⁸¹ *Comm. on Phil. 2:6.*

¹⁸² *Inst. I.xiii.7.*

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁵ *Comm. on Heb. 4: 15.*

the God who predestines some to the eternal life and some to eternal damnation?”¹⁸⁶ The deep unity of God is found in the fact that Christ is the very one who was deeply involved in God’s secret counsel of eternal predestination before creation. People are elected not only *after* the pattern of Christ, and *in* Christ, but also *by* Christ. If we scrutinize Calvin’s thought, we find that the secret act was not done apart from Christ. Concretely, Calvin understands that Christ participates in God’s predestination as the author, ground, medium, and mirror of election.

First, it is necessary to highlight Christ as the author of election. Although Calvin usually ascribes election to God the Father, he also makes it clear that God the Son participated in election by saying, “Christ makes himself the Author of election.”¹⁸⁷ The plan of predestination, the deepest hidden area of God hidden beyond revelation (Hiddenness II), does not belong just to God in heaven, but also to the Son of God. He was there, at the making of the decree of election, as its co-author. Calvin interprets Christ’s own Words in John 13:18, “I am not referring to all of you. I know those I have chosen”, to testify that Christ is the author of election: “Meanwhile, although Christ interposes himself as mediator, he claims for himself, in common with the Father, the right to choose”,¹⁸⁸ and thus “makes himself the author of election.”¹⁸⁹ In his *Commentary on John* 15:16, Calvin reveals that “Christ declares himself to be the author of both [election and ordination].... emphasizing both election and ordination belonging equally to both Father and Son.”¹⁹⁰ Christ “has chosen and set apart the Church as his bride”,¹⁹¹ and Church is elected by Christ.¹⁹² These references, though small in number, are clear evidence to show that Christ is the author of election.

¹⁸⁶ See the discussion of this issue in the above Chapter VI.2.b.2) “Against ‘God with Two Different Wills’”.

¹⁸⁷ *Inst.* III.xxii.7.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁰ *Comm. on John*. 15:16.

¹⁹¹ *Inst.* IV.i.10.

¹⁹² *Comm. on Luke* 8:2.

Second, for Calvin, Christ is the ground of election. We are elected in Christ. Election is understood and recognized in Christ alone. In his sermon on Esau and Jacob, Calvin said: “God chose us before the creation of the world in Jesus Christ...St. Paul says that he chose us in Christ...Our election is founded in Jesus Christ.”¹⁹³ Christ became the ground of election in that Christ is the only ground for our salvation, life, and immortality: “If we seek salvation, life, and immortality of the heavenly kingdom, then there is no other to whom we flee, seeing that he alone is the fountain of life, the anchor of salvation, and the heir of the Kingdom of Heaven.”¹⁹⁴ The ground for election is outside us and thus human merit is excluded: “when he says that we are chosen in Christ, it follows that in ourselves we are unworthy.”¹⁹⁵ This is more clearly explained in the *Institutes*, where Calvin insists that we are elected not on our worth, but on Christ’s worth. Christ provided real worth to the people who are absolutely unworthy of election: “since among all the offspring of Adam, the Heavenly Father found nothing worthy of his election, he turned his eyes upon his Anointed, to choose from that body as members those whom he was to take into the fellowship of life.”¹⁹⁶ Without Christ, the act of election would not have happened. Christ is the only ground of salvation.

Third, for Calvin, Christ is the medium of election. We are elected through Christ. In the course of setting out the Biblical basis for the doctrine of election, Calvin refers to Ephesians 1:3-6, which speaks of predestination in relation to Christ: “For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.” God ratifies his decree through the Mediator: Christ “has been manifested to the

¹⁹³ *Serm. on Gen 25:19-22.*

¹⁹⁴ *Inst. III.xxiv.5.*

¹⁹⁵ *Comm. on Eph. 1:4.*

¹⁹⁶ *Inst. III.xxii.1.*

world in order to *ratify* by his own work what the Father has decreed concerning our salvation.”¹⁹⁷ Christ is the “channel” through whom our salvation, eternally hidden in the predestination of God, flows to us.¹⁹⁸ Christ does his mediatorial work through his redemption. The eternal covenant of adoption, made with the elect, must be made firm “through the hand of Christ”.¹⁹⁹

Fourth, for Calvin, Christ is the mirror of election. To the question, “how do we know that God has elected us before the foundation of the world?” Calvin’s answer is “By believing in Jesus Christ”.²⁰⁰ For Calvin, Christ is “the bright mirror of the eternal and hidden election of God”.²⁰¹ He is “a mirror in which we may behold the fact of our election.”²⁰² To behold Christ in faith is to behold one’s own election. “We have a sufficiently clear and firm testimony that we have been inscribed in the book of Life [Cf. Rev. 21:27] if we are in communion with Christ.”²⁰³ This mirror is characterized as the reciprocal one, where we can behold our election, and God beholds us to find us acceptable.²⁰⁴ Christ stands between the Father and his elect. Outside of the mirror of Christ, predestination approaches us as an impenetrable mystery and abyss. Beyond Christ, it is not only unnecessary but also unlawful to pry into the secret counsel of predestination. However, in the mirror of Christ, we do not have to pry into the secrets of heaven, for the mirror reflects the God who would otherwise be hidden.²⁰⁵ Only Christ lets us see through the thick cloud in which God’s decree is normally veiled. The mirror-knowledge of God is indirect, but true. Therefore, whenever our hearts waver, Calvin wants us to remember that we should always look into the mirror of Christ. Thus he cites Augustine’s memorable

¹⁹⁷ *Comm. on John* 6:38.

¹⁹⁸ *Comm. on Matt.* 11:27.

¹⁹⁹ *Serm. on II Tim.* 11:27.

²⁰⁰ *Sermon on Eph.* 1:4-6.

²⁰¹ *Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God*, 127.

²⁰² *Inst.* III.xxiv.5.

²⁰³ *Inst.* III.xxiv.5.

²⁰⁴ *Sermon on Eph.* 1:4-6.

²⁰⁵ *Comm. on John* 5:22.

axiom, “no more splendid mirror of predestination exists than the mediator Himself.”²⁰⁶

Finally, like Luther, Calvin shows the unity through *perichoresis* referring to “mutual penetration” in the way that God is in Christ, and Christ is in God. The decisive passage is as follows:

Whoever finds himself in Jesus Christ and is a member of his body by faith, he is assured of his salvation; and when we want to know this, we do not need to go up on high to inquire about something that must be hidden from us. For behold! *God himself comes down to us; he shows us enough in his Son*; it is as though he was saying: *Here I am, contemplate me, and know that I have adopted you as my children*. When we receive this message of salvation which is brought to us by the Gospel, from that we know, and assured, that God has chosen us.²⁰⁷

If we carefully analyze this passage, we find that the God who came down to us, saying “Here I am” and “I have adopted you as my child” is not Christ, but the God in Christ, the hidden God who has chosen his people in his secret counsel on high. Here, Calvin introduces God in Christ as the sure guarantee of our salvation who assures us of our salvation. The theological intention is God’s complete unity represented by the *perichoretic* relation. What Christ said in the world was none other than what God in Christ says. There is a complete unity and no dissension. The hidden God in heaven did not just stay on high, but came down with Christ, and in Christ, worked with him in complete unity. This clearly shows the unity between the Father and the Son. With Christ, we can get past all the apparent dissension between God hidden and revealed and all clouds of doubt about our salvation dissipate.

²⁰⁶ *De Dono Persever*, cap. 24., quoted in *Concerning the Eternal predestination of God*, 112.

²⁰⁷ *Congregation sur l’élection éternelle*, *Opp.*, 8, 114, quoted in Wendel, *Calvin*, 274.[Italics mine]

4. A Harmonious Dual Image of a God of Predestination and a God of Love

Many Scots drew a mistaken caricature of the Calvinistic deity: “an arbitrary heartless despot, disposing of the destinies of human beings in this life and the next with capricious cruelty.”²⁰⁸ A. Ritschl thinks of a dual image of God between a God of harsh and dreadful predestination and a God of love.

The idea of God which dominates the doctrine of predestination, the idea of an all-powerful will, capricious, devoid of law, which is its own end and seeks its honour by the contradictory means of election and reprobation, is *completely different* from the idea of God which is developed in the first book and dominates the system as a whole. The good will, kind and just, which represents God reaches its own proper end in the way of finality, in creation and the direction of the world, hence as providence.²⁰⁹

Similarly, his son, O. Ritschl finds in Calvin’s theological system a double God: that of good Father and that of the severe righteousness-demanding God. He regards the image of Divine, unrestricted justice as a more fundamental one than the image of Divine love: “To Calvin’s religious sensitivity the essence of God’s being is not primarily love but immeasurable self-glorification through the unrestricted revelation of his freedom, a freedom that is not bound by any law.”²¹⁰ Therefore, he thinks of the doctrine of God’s unlimited righteousness and predestination as the basic and central dogma and God’s sovereign will as a dominating and all-controlling principle.²¹¹ Besides, we have noted in the introduction of this thesis, Reinhold Seeberg, Max Weber, Ernst Troeltsch, and Zachman characterized Luther’s God as a God of love and forgiveness and Calvin’s God as a God of wrath and predestination.

²⁰⁸ Wright, “Calvin’s Accommodating God”, 3.

²⁰⁹ A. Ritschl, *Geschichtliche Studien zur Christlichen Lehre von Gott, Jahrbücher für Deutsche Theologie*, vol. 13 (Gotha, 1868), 1008.

²¹⁰ O. Ritschl, *Dogmengeschichte des Protestantismus*, vol.3, 179.

However, as we investigated in Chapter III, Calvin's God of predestination is not an "arbitrary or capricious despot" at all. This concept is most detestable to Calvin. It reflects the concept of the absolute power in the Middle Ages; Calvin's God of predestination is a fully righteous, steadfast, and reliable God.

In the large picture of Calvin's theology, it is not proper for the image of a God of love to be reduced or dwindle away under the image of a God of predestination with the absolute power and awesome majesty. David Wright remarks that this image of Calvin's God as love, mercy and forgiveness is well represented in B. A. Gerrish's understanding of the key to Calvin's theology as the fatherly generosity and motherly care: "Not the Divine despot, but the Parent-God, who is goodness itself, was the object of Calvin's piety and therefore the main theme of his doctrine of God."²¹² Wright embellishes Gerrish's point by citing Calvin's well-illustrated commentary on Isaiah 49:15: "Can a woman forget her sucking child?"²¹³

To express his burning affection, he [God] preferred to compare himself to a mother, and he does not call them just "children" but his "baby" [*foetum*], since affection for a baby is normally stronger. The affection a mother feels for her baby is normally stronger. The affection a mother feels for her baby is amazing. She fondles it in her lap, feeds it at her breast, and watches so anxiously over it that she passes sleepless nights, continually wearing herself out and forgetting herself...The affection which God bears towards us is far stronger and warmer than the love of all mothers...Men and women, though perverse and addicted to self-love, take care of their children. What of God, who is goodness itself? Will he be able to cast aside his fatherly affection? By no means.²¹⁴

²¹¹ O. Ritschl, *Dogmengeschichte des Protestantismus*, Band III, 168, 178.

²¹² Wright, "Calvin's Accommodating God", 3-4.

²¹³ B. A. Gerrish, *Grace and Gratitude: The Eucharistic Theology of John Calvin* (Minneapolis: Fortress; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1993), 41. Wright, "Calvin's Accommodating God", 3-4.

Kroon, too, cites the same passage and states, “To Calvin God is a loving Father. But in a stunning way he also compares the affection of God with the love of mothers.”²¹⁵ He understands that, for Calvin, love is the creating cause and this creation as such must already be for us humans a summons to love in return. Kroon argues that “in the love relation between God and humans, humans are touched by the love of God down to the deepest level of their subjectivity: the whole human person is incorporated in this love relation.”²¹⁶ In particular, he finds the merging point between two images of God in the covenant of grace in his theology: “the Covenant forges a bridge from the awesome majesty before which the earth trembles when his voice is sounded to the Father who has bound himself with bonds of love to his people.”²¹⁷ Ultimately, he states, “God’s love and majesty always go together.”²¹⁸

Benjamin Warfield emphasises that even though, for Calvin, sovereignty of God is the hinge of his doctrine of God, “this sovereignty is ever conceived by him as the sovereignty of God our Father.”²¹⁹ In other words, “the sense of the Divine Fatherhood is as fundamental to Calvin’s conception of God as the sense of His sovereignty.”²²⁰ He accentuates the emphasis Calvin throws on God’s love and concludes that “Lord and Father”—fatherly Sovereign, or sovereign father—is how Calvin conceived of God.

Lutheran theologian Kostlin shares this idea: “The chief elements which are dealt with by Calvin in the matter of religious relation are summed up in the proposition: God is our Lord, who has made us, and our Father from whom all good comes; we owe Him, therefore, honor and glory, love and trust.”²²¹ This has a striking similarity with Luther’s

²¹⁴ *Comm. on Isa 49:14*; Gerrish, *Grace and Gratitude*, 40-41; Wright, “Calvin’s Accommodating God”, 4.

²¹⁵ Marijn de Kroon, *The Honour of God and Human Salvation*, trans., John Vriend and Lyle D. Bierma (Edinburgh & New York: T&T Clark, 2001), 12.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*

²¹⁷ Kroon, *The Honour of God and Human Salvation*, 42. Cf. Ps 8:2; 76:8, 9; Hosea 11:4.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*

²¹⁹ Warfield, *Calvin and Calvinism*, 175.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*

²²¹ Kostlin, “Calvin’s Institutions”, in *Studien und Kritiken*, 1868, 424-425, quoted in Warfield, *Calvin and*

view of God represented in *Large Catechism*, noted above, where Luther states, “God is one whom we expect all good and in whom we can take refuge in all our needs, so that to have a God is nothing else to trust and believe in Him with all our hearts.”²²²

Calvin’s doctrine of predestination does not collide with God’s love and grace. Rather Calvin assures us that it was intended to emphasise God’s grace: “Until we know God’s eternal election we cannot be sure that our salvation comes from the fountain of grace given to us without price.”²²³ Calvin’s God of predestination chose humankind not on the basis of anything in the elect, but solely out of Divine mercy. Dewey remarks, “For Calvin the doctrine of double predestination does not in any way change the picture of a God of gratuitous love. Rather it *emphasises* it.”²²⁴ Wilhelm Niesel remarks, “The doctrine of election is the ultimate and essential expression of the evangelical doctrine of grace.”²²⁵ Fred H. Klooster states, “Election is gratuitous election that displays the free mercy and goodness of God.”²²⁶ James B. Torrance indicates, “Another prime way in which Calvin contended for *sola gratia* was to say that this is the meaning of election, that salvation is grounded in the free, unmerited grace of God, without any prior consideration of works or merit, not on any foreknowledge by God of our fulfilling any prior conditions.”²²⁷ The presupposition that without election, nobody can be saved and at the same time our salvation will be unstable emphasises God’s grace more deeply. In this context, as A.M. Hunter aptly points out, “Calvin never ceased to make the Divine pity and mercy shine through the doctrine [of predestination] in such wise as to draw forth the spirit of grateful love and self-sacrificing consecration in those who felt the vitalizing touch of God upon

Calvinism, 175.

²²² WA 30.135.33ff. = *Luther’s Primary Works*, 34 (*Large Catechism*, 1529)

²²³ *Inst.* III.xxi.1.

²²⁴ Dewey, *The Knowledge of God in Calvin’s Theology*, 211.

²²⁵ Wilhelm Niesel, *The Theology of Calvin* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1956), 168.

²²⁶ Fred H. Klooster, *Calvin’s Doctrine of Predestination* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977), 27.

²²⁷ James B. Torrance, “The Concept of Federal Theology—Was Calvin a Federal Theologian?” in *Calvin Sacrae Scripturae Professor*, ed. Wilhelm H. Neuser (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 18.

their souls.”²²⁸

At the same time it should be emphasised that against antagonists’ critical remarks on God’s severity in predestinating some to perdition,²²⁹ Calvin answers that some people’s being damned is not because of God’s despotic severity or his merciless predestination of them to hell, but because of the just judgement of their horrible sin and ignorance of God’s mercy of forgiveness given to them.²³⁰

Even though Wallace indicates that it is remarkable that in the section where Calvin speaks of the “horrible decree”, he relates it to the wisdom and power of God but has no mention of His love,²³¹ we should say that, even in predestination, God’s love and justice both shine in symmetrical balance. If love presides over election, justice shines over in reprobation. They are symmetrical virtues. Therefore Calvin asserts, “There is certainly a mutual relation between the elect and the reprobate.”²³² “To the gratuitous *love* with which the elect are embraced there corresponds on an equal and common level *a just severity* towards the reprobate.”²³³ In predestination, God’s love and justice go together, without any contradiction. God cannot give up one for the other. God and his angels have no joy over the death of the wicked. God shows his just severity to do his duty as judge of the world. Furthermore, along with this symmetrical consideration, Calvin never hesitates in stressing that there is no joy amongst the angels over the death of the wicked and, like Luther, confesses that God’s deeper heart is much closer to love: “When God adopts severity towards men, he indeed does so willingly, because he is the judge of the world: but *he does not do so from the heart, because he wishes all to be innocent.*”²³⁴

²²⁸ Hunter, *The Teaching of Calvin*, 132-33.

²²⁹ Calvin in *Inst.* III.xxi.1 cites Augustine, *Unfinished Treatise Against Julian* I. xlviii; II. viii (MPL 45.1069f., 1145), where, the question is “Why from the beginning did God predestine some to death who, since they did not yet exist, could not yet have deserved the judgement of death?”

²³⁰ *Inst.* III.xxiii.3.

²³¹ Wallace, *Calvin Geneva, and Reformation*, 280.

²³² *Inst.* III.xxiii.1.

²³³ *On the Eternal Predestination of God*, 90.

²³⁴ *Comm. on Lam.* 3:31-3; Cf. *Comm. on Isa.*, 1:21.

Calvin's real intention is neither dichotomy between two distinct images of God, nor any overpowering of one image than the other, but a harmonious and well balanced unity of them. Similar to Luther, Calvin constantly emphasises a God of predestination as none other than a God of love, grace, and forgiveness. The very heart of Calvin's doctrine lies in the conviction that absolute power (in a positive sense) and infinite love are not separated, but united in God.

That our faith may rest truly and firmly in God, we must take into consideration at the same time these two parts of his character—his immeasurable power, by which he is able to subdue the whole world unto him, and his fatherly love, which he has manifested in his word. When these two things are joined together, there is nothing which can hinder our faith from defying all the enemies which may rise up against us, nor must we doubt that God will succor us, since he has promised to do it; and as to power, he is sufficiently able also fulfill his promise, for he is the God of armies.²³⁵

Therefore, as in Luther, we should stress that Calvin is not biased toward a God of harsh predestination and severity, but strives to keep a balance between a God of love and a God of harsh predestination, and indeed, unites them in one and the same God. It is not proper to give biased weight to either aspect, thus breaking this symmetrical balance. Calvin sees losing this balance as the temptation of Satan: "For I call it a spiritual temptation, not only when we be smitten and afflicted in our bodies: but also when the devil comes to put a toy in our head, that God is our deadly enemy, and that it is not for us to resort any more unto Him, but rather to assure ourselves, that henceforth he will not show us any mercies."²³⁶ And vice versa: if we look at the mercy of God, neglecting a God of harsh predestination and severity, this, too, brings serious problems because forgetting the eschatological judgement of God makes it easy to fall into license and arrogance, deluding ourselves into thinking that we are justified. "In short, this whole discussion will be foolish and weak

²³⁵ CR 31.364, quoted in Leith, *John Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life*, 114, footnote.

²³⁶ *Sermons on Job* 1:1, 1.

unless every man admit his guilt before the Heavenly Judge, and concerned about his own acquittal, willingly cast himself down and confess his nothingness.”²³⁷ In a sense, as in Luther, for Calvin, the symmetry between these two images can be understood in the context of the symmetry between God’s attributes such as God’s love and justice.²³⁸ There is no inner contradiction between them. As Hunter aptly expresses, “It is the part of faith to believe that behind the veil mercy and judgement kiss one another.”²³⁹ In a more definite way, Calvin characterizes their relation as *agreement* and *symmetry*, as we see in the analogy of the inseparableness of sun’s light and heat.

One might more readily take the sun’s light from its heat or its heat from its heat from its fire than separate God’s power and his justice.... For such is the *symmetry* and *agreement* between his mercy and his justice that nothing proceeds from him that is not moderate, lawful, and orderly.²⁴⁰

5. The Position and Role of the Holy Spirit in God Hidden and Revealed

In Calvin, we can find some traces to show a distinct place for the Holy Spirit in the frame of dichotomous structure of God hidden and revealed: “the Holy Spirit as the hidden God beyond accommodation” vs. “the Holy Spirit as the accommodating and revealed God”. In his *Commentary on Matthew* 3:16, Calvin describes the Holy Spirit as God in himself, the Spirit of God who “is everywhere present, and fills heaven and earth...he is himself invisible.” On the other hand, Calvin speaks of the accommodating Holy Spirit: the

²³⁷ *Inst.* III.xii.1. Cf. II.xii.5.

²³⁸ Calvin understands God’s wrath as another expression of justice: “We acknowledge, therefore, the elect to be recipients of his mercy and the rejected to be recipients of *his wrath, however, which is nothing but just.*” [italics mine] in Calvin, *Instruction in Faith* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1949), 36f.

²³⁹ Hunter, *Teaching of Calvin*, 50.

²⁴⁰ *CO* VIII.361, quoted in John T. McNeil, *The History and Character of Calvinism* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), 212.

Holy Spirit always “accommodates itself to our infirmity”.²⁴¹ Especially, Calvin indicates that the Holy Spirit who descended in the form of a dove is neither God’s essence nor God in himself, but his appearance is accommodated to our understanding of faith, which is “a kind of figure of speech”.

He saw the Spirit of God. That is, John saw: for it immediately follows, that the Spirit descended on Christ. There now arises a third question, how could John see the Holy Spirit? I reply: As the Spirit of God is everywhere present, and fills heaven and earth, he is not said, in a literal sense, to descend, and the same observation may be made as to his appearance. Though he is in himself invisible, yet he is spoken of as beheld, when he exhibits any visible sign of his presence. John did not see the essence of the Spirit, which cannot be discerned by the senses of men; nor did he see his power, which is not beheld by human senses, but only by the understanding of faith: but he saw the appearance of a dove, under which God showed the presence of his Spirit. It is a figure of speech, by which the sign is put for the thing signified, the name of a spiritual object being applied to the visible sign.²⁴²

In his *Commentary on Acts 2:2*, we find another dichotomy between the Holy Spirit as God himself and the Holy Spirit as the accommodated God. Here Calvin explains the Holy Spirit as God himself as incomprehensible Divine essence.

Yea, the word Spirit itself is a translated word; for, because that hypostasis, or person of the Divine essence, which is called the Spirit, is of itself incomprehensible, Scripture doth borrow the word of the wind or blast, because it is the power of God which God doth pour into all creatures as it were by breathing.²⁴³

This incomprehensible Divine essence takes body in relation to us under the visible form of tongues of fire or dove for the purpose of displaying the presence of his invisible

²⁴¹ *Comm. on II Cor. 6:11*. [Italics mine]

²⁴² *Comm. on Matt. 3:16*.

²⁴³ *Comm. on Act 2:2*.

and hidden grace. “Furthermore, the Lord did once give the Holy Ghost under a visible shape, that we may assure ourselves that his invisible and hidden grace shall never be wanting to the Church.”²⁴⁴ These are the signs that God chose “because the Lord would testify and declare the presence of his Spirit by some such sign.”²⁴⁵

The Holy Spirit plays a key role in helping us to see the revealed God in accommodation. Calvin highlights that the external, objective revelation is of no use without the help of the internal, subjective preparation to perceive this revelation. Wendel indicates that Calvin understands the interior witness of the Holy Spirit as the supreme criterion upon which the authority of Scriptures is found, while rejecting the external authority found upon the authority and tradition of the Church, claimed by the Roman Church.²⁴⁶ The same Holy Spirit who inspired the authors of the books of Scripture also inspires us when we read their writings so that we may have the tangible proof of the identity of that inspiration, which makes the necessary and indissoluble bond between Scripture and the Holy Spirit.²⁴⁷ This internal preparation is the work of the Holy Spirit to open the inner eye. If the Spirit of discernment had not opened the eyes of the mind, the sightless would be given light in vain.²⁴⁸ Even if God reveals himself in his accommodation in various forms, even if he shows us signs and wonders, we cannot know God unless God gives us a heart to understand, or ears to hear, or eyes to see [Deut. 29:3-4].²⁴⁹ In the Incarnation, though the majesty and glory of God is surrounded by flesh and thus concealed under the low condition of the flesh, only those persons, “whose eyes the Holy Spirit opened, saw this manifestation of glory.”²⁵⁰ The Spirit forms our ears to hear

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ Wendel, *Calvin*, 157. Cf. *Inst.* I.vii.1.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ *Inst.* III.ii.34.

²⁴⁹ *Inst.* II.ii.20.

²⁵⁰ *Comm. on John* 1:14.

and our minds to understand by a wonderful and singular power.²⁵¹ We have no eye to perceive “the invisible Divinity represented indeed by the displays of His power, unless they are illuminated through faith by the inner revelation of God.”²⁵²

Butin especially emphasises that revelation is the “Trinitarian basis of God’s relationship with humanity”.²⁵³ According to his interpretation, the Father is the source and subject in Divine revelation. He is not only the revealer, but also the one who is revealed. The Father is disclosed in Christ. Christ is our only path to the knowledge of God the Father. Butin understands that the Spirit is the efficacy of the Divine self-disclosure; the Divine power that enables human appropriation. Butin takes notice of the *Institutes* I.xiii.18 for this Trinitarian structure of revelation where the Father is “fountain and well spring” of Divine self disclosure; the son is “wisdom, counsel, and the ordered disposition” of Divine self disclosure; the Spirit is the “power and efficacy of the action” of and the breath that carries, vivifies, and articulates that which is spoken in Scripture.²⁵⁴ Here we get some hint that in Calvin’s revelation the structure of God hidden and revealed and Trinitarian structure are not contradictory, but compensatory. Strictly speaking, we find double hiddenness in Trinitarian structure. First, in the relation between the Father and the Son, the Father who remained an absolute and naked God becomes Hiddenness II,²⁵⁵ and the Son becomes the revealed God. Some of Calvin’s statements demonstrate this:

But the Father, who dwells in light inaccessible and is in Himself incomprehensible, is revealed to us by the Son, His lively image, and in vain do we seek him elsewhere.²⁵⁶

He is the image of God to us because He reveals to us things in His Father that would otherwise remain hidden.²⁵⁷

²⁵¹ *Inst.* II.ii.20.

²⁵² *Inst.* I.v.14.

²⁵³ Butin, *Revelation, Redemption, and Response*, 55-61.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 61.

²⁵⁵ *Comm. on John* 5:22.

²⁵⁶ *Comm. on Matt.* 11:27.

²⁵⁷ *Comm. on Cor. II* 4:6.

...in His face God the Father, otherwise hidden far away, appears to us, so that the naked majesty of God shall not engulf us with its infinite brightness.²⁵⁸

In the relation between the Son and the Holy Spirit and humanity, the Son as the accommodated God still remains Hiddenness I to us until the Holy Spirit begins to work so that we may be “drawn by the Spirit to be aroused to seek Christ” and find “the invisible Father” and his “true image of God” in Christ.²⁵⁹ Calvin explains this relation as follows:

It is the Father’s gift that the Son is known, for by His Spirit He opens the eyes of our minds and we perceive the glory of Christ which otherwise would be hidden from us.²⁶⁰

Ultimately Calvin concludes that “faith is the principal work of the Holy Spirit.”²⁶¹ Christ illumines us into faith by the power of his Spirit.²⁶² According to Forstman, Calvin considered the work of the Spirit in confirming faith as his principal work.²⁶³ Forstman explains the works of the Holy Spirit to faith in three ways.²⁶⁴ First, the Holy Spirit makes what God has done in Christ directed toward the individual. Second, the Holy Spirit persuades one that what has happened in Christ has happened “for me”—subjective apprehension in individual. Third, through the Holy Spirit, one is united to Christ by an intimate and secure bond.

The role of the Holy Spirit is to draw us to Christ and unite us with him. Christ in his body is far from us, but by his Spirit he dwells within us and draws us upward to himself in

²⁵⁸ *Comm. on John 5:22.*

²⁵⁹ *Inst. III.ii.1.*

²⁶⁰ *Comm. on Matt 11:27.*

²⁶¹ *Inst. III.i.4.*

²⁶² *Inst. III.ii.35.*

²⁶³ H. Jackson Forstman, *Word and Spirit* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1962), 74.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 72.

the heavens. We must be drawn *by the Spirit* to be aroused to seek Christ.²⁶⁵ We cannot come to Christ unless we are drawn by the Spirit of God.²⁶⁶ The Holy Spirit opens the eyes of our minds and we perceive the glory of Christ which otherwise would be hidden from us.²⁶⁷ The Holy Spirit illuminates our blind eye to open and see Christ. Ultimately the Holy Spirit is the bond by which Christ efficaciously unites us to himself.²⁶⁸

For Calvin, it should be emphasised that the Holy Spirit leads us to the hidden God in an indirect way. The way to the hidden God is only through Christ, the revealed God. The Holy Spirit leads us to Christ, who is the mirror of the hidden God. Even though the illumination of the Holy Spirit to guide us stops before the massive portal of hidden counsel, the function of the Holy Spirit to draw us to the hidden God through the revealed God is still effective.

The Holy Spirit is the bond to unite the revealed God and the hidden God. Calvin understands that the Holy Spirit is sometimes called “Spirit of the Father”, sometimes, the “Spirit of the Son”.²⁶⁹ Calvin does not differentiate between them. Besides, for Calvin, the term “the Spirit of Christ” is the appellation of the Holy Spirit. Calvin declares that the Holy Spirit joins the Son and the Father in heaven: “Christ, as eternal Word of God, is joined in the same Spirit with the Father.”²⁷⁰ This is the very clue to show that the Holy Spirit is the bond to unite the hidden God and the revealed God. In fact, “the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God” [1 Cor. 2:16].

Marijn de Kroon calls the Holy Spirit “the bridge-builder”, because he not only “constructs the bridge between God and human persons by which the latter become children of God and God becomes their Father”, but also “forges and maintains the link

²⁶⁵ *Inst.* III.ii.1.

²⁶⁶ *Inst.* III.ii.34.

²⁶⁷ *Comm. on Matt.* 11:27.

²⁶⁸ *Inst.* III.i.1.

²⁶⁹ *Inst.* III.i.2.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

between the immeasurable majesty and the loving Father.”²⁷¹

True knowledge of the hidden God is based on the inseparable cooperation of the Triune life of God: “to the Father is attributed the beginning of activity, and the foundation and wellspring of all things; to the Son, wisdom, counsel, and ordered disposition of all things; but to the Spirit is assigned the power and efficacy of that activity.”²⁷² God the Father, fountain of all things, reveals himself in the incarnate Son, who as the wisdom of God is the invisible Father, by the power of the Holy Spirit, which reveals the Father in the Son and engrafts us into him. “There can be no knowledge of Christ until the Father enlightens by His Spirit those who are blind by nature; and yet it is useless to seek God unless Christ leads the way, for the majesty of God is higher than man’s senses can reach.”²⁷³ Calvin understands the Divine decree of election as collaborative work of all three persons of Trinity,²⁷⁴ even though he puts more stress on the roles of the Father and the Son. For Calvin, the Holy Spirit as the author of the decree is not explicit. However, it is obvious that He is not excluded from the doctrine of election. He is the teacher of the doctrine,²⁷⁵ and his soteriological work is devoted to accomplishing the eternal and immutable decree of God.²⁷⁶

²⁷¹ Kroon, *The Honour of God and Human Salvation*, 43.

²⁷² *Inst.* I.xiii.18.

²⁷³ *Comm. on John* 6:46.

²⁷⁴ *Inst.* III.i.13 and III.i.16-18.

²⁷⁵ *Inst.* I.vi-ix.

²⁷⁶ *Inst.* III.i and the whole of book III.

6. The Hidden God and Our Knowledge of God

a. Knowledge of God Hidden and Revealed

Calvin states a general principle about knowledge of the hidden God: “I desire only to have them [the false apostles] generally admit that we should not investigate what the Lord has left hidden in secret, that we should not neglect what he has brought into the open, so that we may not be convicted of excessive curiosity on the one hand, or of excessive ingratitude on the other.”²⁷⁷ For Calvin, “to seek any other knowledge of predestination than what the Word of God discloses is no less insane than if one should purpose to walk in a pathless waste [Cf. Job 12:24], or to see in darkness.”²⁷⁸ When the Lord closes his holy lips, he also shall at once close the way to inquiry.²⁷⁹ Especially, the “why” beyond “his pleasure and will” is completely hidden as a deep secret of God’s abyss and labyrinth. Calvin asserts that the question of why God has so willed it is completely beyond our comprehension.

With Augustine I say: the Lord has created those who, he unquestionably foreknew would go to destruction. This has happened because he has so willed it. But why he so willed it, it is not for our reason to inquire, for we cannot comprehend it.

Therefore, it is not proper to “search out the thing unrestrainedly that the Lord has willed to be hid in himself, and to unfold from eternity itself the sublimest wisdom, which he would have us revere but not understand that through this also he should fill us with wonder.”²⁸⁰ Calvin is harshly against the curious attempt to pry into the eternal decree of

²⁷⁷ *Inst.* III.xxi.4.

²⁷⁸ *Inst.* III.xxi.2.

²⁷⁹ *Inst.* III.xxi.3.

²⁸⁰ *Inst.* III.xxi.1.

God and tireless in rebuking whoever tries to attempt it: “he casts himself into the depths of a bottomless whirlpool to be swallowed up; then he tangles himself in innumerable and inextricable snares; then he buries himself in an abyss of sightless darkness.”²⁸¹ Thus, in his *Commentary on Exod. 33:18*, Calvin sets up “the rule of sound and legitimate and profitable knowledge”. The rule is to be contained within the limits of moderation and sobriety, and content with the measure of revelation, and willing to be ignorant of what is deeper than this.

On the other hand, we should be careful not to neglect what God has brought into the open. Calvin warns us not to fall into an excessive timidity that dares not speak where Scripture speaks. It is dangerous for people to be “so cautious or fearful that they desire to bury predestination in order not to disturb weak souls.”²⁸² The Bible itself draws some aspects of predestination, the secret counsel of God in abyss—when and how and why God predestinated people into two groups, one to eternal bliss, and the other to eternal damnation, and how God actualizes this secret plan in history. These are what God reveals in Scripture of the secrets of His will, because “he decided to reveal in so far as he foresaw that they would concern us and benefit us.”²⁸³ These are the knowledge open to all with faith and what we should not neglect. “We must guard depriving believers of anything disclosed about predestination in Scripture, lest we seem either wickedly to defraud them of the blessing of their God or to accuse and scoff at the Holy Spirit for having published what it is in any way profitable to press.”²⁸⁴

For Calvin, the best way for us to get the true knowledge of God is “to behold God, as He appears in His only-begotten Son, than to search out His secret essence.”²⁸⁵ In other words, he believes we can get more benefit in getting knowledge of God from the

²⁸¹ *Inst.* III.xxiv.4.

²⁸² *Inst.* III.xxi.4.

²⁸³ *Inst.* III.xxi.1.

²⁸⁴ *Inst.* III.xxi.3. Cf. *Comm. on Romans* 9:14.

accommodated God than from the hidden God in the abyss. This knowledge from God's accommodation can be the true knowledge of God, if not complete. Through revelation, God discloses himself in the incarnate Word and the written Word. However, we just know as much as only God lets us know by revelation. As Calvin puts it, we are "incapable of understanding the mysteries of God, any further than he has been illuminated by Divine grace."²⁸⁶ Here the question is how we can get the true knowledge of God from God's accommodation? Calvin suggests several ways to get this knowledge.

First, we are to *recognize our limitation* to get the true knowledge of God. This appears contradictory. However, in Calvin's theology, this entails a deeper truth. He states,

Let no man hesitate to acknowledge that he is incapable of understanding the mysteries of God, any further than he has been illuminated by Divine grace. He, who attributes to himself more understanding, is so much the blinder, because he does not perceive and acknowledge his blindness.²⁸⁷

People are utterly lost if left to themselves because the knowledge of God is far beyond our reach. "And certainly the knowledge of God is a wisdom that is too high for our attaining it by our own acuteness, and our weakness shows itself in daily instance in our experience, when God withdraws his hand for a little while."²⁸⁸ The knowledge of God completely depends on God's grace of illumination, and only those who know his limitation and poverty can ask for God's grace of illumination, without which nobody can access the true knowledge of God.

Second, we need *spiritual renewal from perverted pride* of man's mind. For Calvin, the perversity of the mind hinders us from getting the true knowledge of God. The

²⁸⁵ *Comm. on II Cor.* 4:6.

²⁸⁶ *Inst.* II.ii.21.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁸ *Comm. on Phil.* 1:29.

perversity of the mind takes the form of an attitude of pride. “Where pride is, he is ignorant of God.”²⁸⁹ With pride, nobody can come to know God. In his *Commentary on 1 John* 3:2, Calvin clarifies the importance of “renewal of the image of God”, in our knowledge of God: “as far as the image of God is renewed in us, we have eyes prepared to see God.”²⁹⁰ Of course, complete cure will happen when we will be like him. However, even before then, our eye can be cured in some measure, though not completely, by the power of the Holy Spirit. When the thick skin of perverted pride is scaled away, it can be cured.

Third, we should get the true knowledge of God *through oblique light*, that is, through coverings. Just as we cannot see the sun directly, with bare eyes, we “cannot behold God’s glory freely and directly. He illuminates us obliquely, so that at least we see him from behind.”²⁹¹ Here the oblique light is in contrast with the direct illumination. In Calvin’s theology, direct illumination refers to any direct attempt with bold curiosity to penetrate to the investigation of his essence. However, “our capacity cannot endure the fullness of the infinite glory which belongs to the essence of God.”²⁹² Then what does Calvin mean by “*seeing through oblique light*”? For Calvin, “*seeing through oblique light*” means “*seeing God through his coverings or veils*” which God puts on for the forms adapted to our capacity, thus softening his dazzling majesty. The invisible God clothed himself in his works in the form of the familiar and visible image of the world, so that we can observe his presence in it.²⁹³ Therefore, coverings are the way we can see God obliquely. The striking model of “seeing through the oblique light” is to see the glory of God manifested to us in the face of Jesus Christ. “God is not to be *sought out* in His unsearchable height, for He dwells in light that is inaccessible (1 Timothy 6:16), but is to be known by us, in so far as

²⁸⁹ *Comm. on 1 Cor.* 8:2.

²⁹⁰ *Comm. on 1 John* 3:2.

²⁹¹ *Comm. on Exod.* 33:21.

²⁹² *Comm. on Matt.* 17:5.

²⁹³ *Comm. on Gen.* “Argument”

He manifests himself in Christ.”²⁹⁴

Fourth, Calvin argues that we should *see God through the mirror of signs or symbols*. It is true that all creation is God’s accommodation, but, as in Luther, there are special signs or symbols to let us see God better. Signs are means whereby “God discovered His presence.”²⁹⁵ They are the meeting place between God and man, where there is indeed the “face of God”.²⁹⁶ Signs or symbols are called the mirrors or looking glasses through which we can look into God’s reality. The Word is a mirror in which we can see the secrets of Heaven, which otherwise seen would dazzle their eyes, astonish their ears and amaze their minds.²⁹⁷ The Ark is always for Calvin a sign of the presence of God, “not a vain or illusory symbol”,²⁹⁸ but a real Sacramental object. These signs and symbols are not only the looking glasses, but also ladders by which the mind of man can be raised to heaven. These are chosen by God himself to reveal himself so that people might not pervert the sign into a lifeless idol, or imagine God as limited within the sign, that is to say, to “fix” God under self-chosen and lifeless idol.

Fifth, Calvin believes we should *look higher and pass beyond*. In Scripture, we find many kinds of figurative expressions in the Bible containing some spiritual truth. Scripture speaks in a way that is not literally accurate in order to enable its readers to grasp what transcends literal accuracy. To get the spiritual reality in those expressions lacking apparently literal exactness, we should not confine ourselves to the literal accuracy or veils God wears, but have the wisdom to watch the spiritual reality beyond it. This principle applies to all kinds of accommodation. All accommodation is composed of the accommodation mode and the spiritual reality in it. If we just see the accommodation mode and fail to see the spiritual reality, the accommodation mode is no more than the block to

²⁹⁴ *Comm. on II Cor. 4:6.*

²⁹⁵ *Inst.I.xi.3.*

²⁹⁶ *Comm. on Ps. 42:2.*

²⁹⁷ *Comm. on Rom. 10:8.*

hide the spiritual reality because of our limited and blind sight.²⁹⁹ At the same time, we should not confuse God's accommodation modes with the spiritual reality in it. For Calvin, to do this is to create an idol because it equates creation with God in it. The ideal way to perceive the spiritual reality is described as "*look higher*" or "*pass beyond*". When God is said to be in heaven, it is not meant that he is inside it; we must remember the words "heaven of heavens do not contain him and God is higher than the whole world."³⁰⁰ The right interpretation comes only when we "raise our eyes to heaven, exalt the Deity of God above all his creatures."³⁰¹ This is true of the Ark. In spite of God's intention to make the Ark a sign of his presence, God prohibited people from fixing their attention to it, and ordered them "to raise their eyes to heaven, and there to seek and adore God".³⁰² It is God, not the Ark that was to be adored. The same is true of Jesus Christ. "We must not content ourselves by looking at the bodily presence of Jesus Christ, which was visible, but we must *look higher*...It is not enough for us to behold Him with our natural eyes; for in this case we should rise no higher than man."³⁰³

b. The Hidden God and Our Faith

Calvin defines faith as "a firm and certain knowledge of God's benevolence toward us, founded upon the truth of the freely given promise in Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts through the Holy Spirit."³⁰⁴ As the hidden counsel belongs to God's deeper hiddenness, even faith and the Holy Spirit cannot penetrate the recess of

²⁹⁸ *Comm. on Ps.* 24:8.

²⁹⁹ For instance, "The Jews were offended at the mean condition of Christ's human nature, and did not perceive in Him anything Divine or heavenly." *Comm. on John* 6:41.

³⁰⁰ *Comm. on Matt.* 6:9f.

³⁰¹ *Comm. on John* 17:1.

³⁰² *Comm. on Isa.* 46:2.

³⁰³ *Serm. on 1 Tim.* 3:16.

³⁰⁴ *Inst.* III.ii.7.

hidden counsel. Here arises the problem: without a conviction of one's election, the future becomes unstable. However, for Calvin, this is Satan's wicked scheme to unsettle us so that we have no certainty of election: "Satan has no more grievous or dangerous temptation to dishearten believers than when he unsettles them with doubt about their election, while at the same time he arouses them with a wicked desire to seek it outside the way."³⁰⁵ It reminds us of the question Pighius raised: "How can one be sure of salvation if it is hidden in the secret of counsel of God?" However, though we cannot trace back or penetrate the hidden counsel of God directly, God allows us the indirect mirror of Christ to let us know whether one is predestined or not. Calvin finds the certainty of salvation set forth in Christ.³⁰⁶ For Calvin, faith in Christ gives believers the assurance of election. Faith is a sufficient witness of the eternal predestination of God.³⁰⁷ It would be a horrible sacrilege to seek higher assurance. "Wherefore men are being fantastical or fanatical if they look for their salvation or for the salvation of others in the labyrinth of predestination instead of keeping to the way of faith which is offered to them."³⁰⁸ Whoever wants to seek it in the hidden depths of God's counsel is reversing all order and is doing a great dishonor to the Son. If Christ is "the clear glass in which we behold the eternal and hidden election of God", faith is "the eye, by which we behold that eternal life God sets before us in this glass".³⁰⁹ Though the way "through the glass or mirror of Christ" is the indirect way, it is the most sure and confidential way because the mirror of Christ evidently shows us whether we are elected.

There is no contradiction between our faith and predestination. Rather, Calvin declares, "Divine election is the origin and cause of our faith."³¹⁰ For Calvin,

³⁰⁵ *Inst.* III.xxiv.4.

³⁰⁶ *Inst.* III.xxi.1; xxiv.4-10.

³⁰⁷ *Comm. on John* 6:40.

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁹ *CR* 8:318, quoted in Leith, *John Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life*, 133-134.

³¹⁰ *Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God*, 127.

predestination can be understood only within the context of faith.³¹¹ Faith does not decide election. Rather, faith is the result of election. Faith gives us a conviction that we are elected in Christ. For Calvin, “election is prior to faith, but is learned by faith.”³¹² When God has called us and enlightened us in the faith of his gospel, it is not to bring to naught the everlasting predestination that went before.³¹³ Calvin reconciles the certainty of our faith with the fixed decree of Divine election. Predestination does not endanger the certainty of salvation but rather gives it the necessary unshakeable basis. It stimulates us “to glorify God’s judgements and to exclaim with Paul. Oh deep and incomprehensible abyss!”³¹⁴

Knowledge from God’s accommodation is knowledge of “what God is like” rather than “what God is”. Calvin’s principal and overriding concern is what God is like to us rather than what God is. “It is not so much our concern to know who God is in himself, as his will towards us... We hold faith to be a knowledge of God’s will towards us, perceived from his Word.”³¹⁵ In nature, “so many burning lamps shine for us in the workmanship of the universe to show forth the glory of its Author.”³¹⁶ Their light is so strong as to “bathe us wholly in their radiance.” However, because of our blind eyes, they cannot lead us into the right path. This is why we need faith for searching for God accommodated in nature. “Faith is a miracle of God whereby He makes Himself to be seen by us, although he is hidden from us, and we can by no means come nigh to Him.”³¹⁷ In the Incarnation, God puts on the veil of human flesh. “His glory lay hid under the humble form of flesh. Though a majesty worthy of the only begotten Son of God shone forth in Him, yet the greater part of men did not see it, but, on the contrary, they despised that deep abasement which was

³¹¹ *Inst.* III.xxiv.

³¹² *Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God*, 127.

³¹³ *Serm. on Tim. and Tit.* 710a.

³¹⁴ *Comm. on Matt.* 23.24.

³¹⁵ *Inst.* III.ii.6.

³¹⁶ *Inst.* I.vi.14.

³¹⁷ *Serm. on 1 Tim.* 1:17-9.

the veil or covering of His glory.”³¹⁸ Hence we see that we must not judge the glory of Christ by human view, but must discern by faith what is taught us concerning him by the Holy Scriptures. His Divine nature and the glory of Christ can be discerned only by faith, not by human sense which “cannot comprehend that lofty greatness.”³¹⁹

For Calvin, faith is essential in rediscovering God who hides his face. Sometimes, God hides his face. According to Calvin, this hiddenness coming from God’s hiding his face is related to God’s withdrawal: “because he appears to withdraw, and, in some measure, to conceal himself, when he permits his people to be afflicted and oppressed by various calamities.”³²⁰ We feel that God is sometimes deaf to our praying.³²¹ God seems to be far away in adversity.³²² Sometimes we wonder if God has forgotten them, since God has not come to help them.³²³ Especially, in Job, God is silent to the inexplicable suffering and “hides his face.”³²⁴ At the heart of Job’s story, Job suffers by the spiritual anguish caused by the hiddenness of God. This Divine hiddenness makes the faithful dubious of God’s providence when they consider the injustice and confusion in historical events. Why does God hide his face and conceal his purpose?³²⁵ Schreiner criticizes, “Calvin is not speaking of a wisdom that ‘lies hidden in the unseen’, but rather of a hiddenness that darkens history, threatens faith, and tempts one to despair.”³²⁶ Schreiner finds that in his progress through his line-by-line exposition of the text, Calvin struggles more and more intensely with the hidden and darker side of the Divine nature. In Calvin’s view, “adversities functions like clouds which hide God’s face, just as clouds obscure the

³¹⁸ *Comm. on Isa. 52:14.*

³¹⁹ *Comm. on Isa. 53:2.*

³²⁰ *Comm. on Isa. 45:15.*

³²¹ Psalm 80:5.

³²² Psalm 10:1.

³²³ Psalm 13:1-2.

³²⁴ Schreiner, *Where Shall Wisdom Be Found?*, 94.

³²⁵ *Ibid.*, 104-5.

³²⁶ *Ibid.*, 94.

brightness of the sun.”³²⁷ It is not easy “to discern God’s favor amidst the darkness of adversity.” The fundamental reason why God hides his face and he does not seem to have any concern about our misery is that “our own eyes, not his, are closed and dull.”³²⁸ Faith lets us rely on God’s promise of grace and salvation in the darkness of God’s absence. With the eye of faith, we can break through the clouds and see the hidden righteousness of God.³²⁹ Faith functions like wings with which a person can fly past the clouds concealing God from us into the region of hidden reality.³³⁰

c. Gradation of Revelation

In his *Commentary on Genesis* 32:29, Calvin explains that God prescribed a certain gradation of revelation according to the ages we live. There is “the bounds prescribed to the age”—some limitation of revelation allowed in each age. Our curiosity to “break forth beyond the contended limit now prescribed by God”, makes us intolerable. Calvin calls the prescribed lucidity of God’s revelation “measure of Illumination”. For instance, Calvin understands Jacob’s asking God’s name as the effort to get greater lucidity of revelation: “though Jacob does acknowledge God, yet, not content with an obscure and slight knowledge, he wishes to ascend higher.” There are several stages of gradation of revelation.

First there is *an age of the law*. Under the age of the law, people are just allowed to walk in the “twilight of morning”. In his interpretation of Jacob’s asking God’s name, Calvin estimates even Jacob’s knowledge of God as “obscure and slight knowledge” given to him “under so many veils and coverings”.

The second is *the age of gospel*. In this age, “God has approached more nearly unto

³²⁷ *Comm. on Ps.* 31:16; 43:2.

³²⁸ *Comm. on Ps.* 31:16.

³²⁹ *Comm. on Ps.* 94:15, 26.

³³⁰ *Comm. on Ps.* 18:15.

us” than Moses and Jacob. The Lord manifested himself to them by degrees until, at length, Christ the Sun of Righteousness arose, in whom perfect brightness shines forth. For Calvin, while the revelation in the Old Testament is dim like “twilight of morning”, the revelation of the gospel is bright like “the splendor of the Sun”.³³¹ If we refer to the knowledge of God under the law as “dark and feeble”,³³² we can refer that in the Gospel as “the face of God”.³³³

However, the final stage is called *the age of glorification*. The best knowledge of God in the gospel is just “partial”. The eye of faith can just see the back of God, not the face of God (Exodus 33:23). At most, the revelation in the gospel is God’s presentation of himself to be seen by us, not such as he is, but such as we can comprehend. This is well expressed in the phrase, “We just see now through a glass, darkly.” (1 Cor. 13:12.). This is due to our limitation of our mortal flesh: “while we are surrounded by this mortal flesh, we never penetrate so far into the deepest secrets of God as to have nothing hidden from us.”³³⁴ For Calvin, this limitation of our mortal flesh is like a “veil” which cannot be drawn up or eliminated while we inhabit this mortal flesh. This veil prevents our direct perception of God as he is while we are alive on earth. Only at the age of glorification when we are divested of this veil can we see God as he is: “Hence the majesty of God, now hid, will then only be in itself seen, when the veil of this mortal and corruptible nature shall be removed... Except then we be stripped of all the corruption of the flesh, we shall not be able to behold God face to face.”³³⁵ Here, Calvin introduces a revolutionary change in our soul when we are divested of our mortal flesh. At the age of glory, we shall be like him as partakers of the Divine glory. We will be given a new and an ineffable manner of seeing

³³¹ *Comm. on Gen. 32:29.*

³³² *Comm. on Isa. 52:9.*

³³³ *Comm. on 1 John 5:20.*

³³⁴ *Comm. on 1 Tim. 6:16.*

³³⁵ *Comm. on 1 John 3:2.*

him, which we are not equipped with, but we will get.³³⁶ This is the fundamental change of our perception which follows in the process of glorification. This fundamental change enables our sight to “penetrate even to his celestial glory” and “ascend to the incomprehensible glory of God.” At that time, God will be no more consuming fire to consume us. God will not make us tremble with fear. God will not be blurred like image in the glass any longer. There will be no veil between God and us. This ineffable perception allows us to behold God face to face.

In conclusion, the purpose of this chapter was to explore the relation between God hidden and revealed in Calvin. In order to reach this purpose, we examined various aspects of the relation between God hidden and revealed, including the relation between Hiddenness I and Hiddenness II, the relation between the accommodated God and God himself, the relation between a God of predestination and a God of love, the relation between the hidden God and Trinity, the relation between hidden God and our faith. Our findings are as follows:

For Calvin, Hiddenness I and Hiddenness II have a distinct, but inseparable relation. Calvin understood the relation between God hidden and revealed as “continuity in discontinuity” and “unity in contradiction.” Calvin recognizes that there is an impassable gulf between the accommodated God and God himself. However, it is not right to say that the accommodation represents the false aspect of God himself. There is correlation between them. We can meet God himself in God’s accommodation. God is present in his accommodation. Calvin is convinced of God’s unity in spite of all apparent contradiction. Calvin pours much effort to shatter all apparent contradictions and fight against those concepts of ‘capricious God *ex lex in potentia absoluta*’, ‘God with two different wills’, ‘God who changes his will’, ‘God as the author of evil’, and ‘God as an unjust and

³³⁶ Ibid.

unreliable judge'. Through these strenuous arguments, Calvin tries to reveal "God's unity in apparent contradiction" between the accommodated God and God himself. In particular, for Calvin, the great foundation to ensure for us the unity of God hidden and revealed is his Christology. Christ is the only way to true knowledge of God. He is the ladder to God in heaven. He is the source of all revelation. Besides, Christ participated in God's hidden counsel. Calvin's hidden God doctrine does not reject the doctrine of Trinity. Rather, they are in the compensatory relation.

From these conclusions about Calvin, we can turn to a comparison of the relation between God hidden and revealed in Luther and Calvin with the help of what we have discussed before so far.

Conclusion of Part C: Comparison of the Relation between God Hidden and Revealed in Luther and Calvin

In Chapter V and Chapter VI, we examined Luther and Calvin's ideas on the relation between God hidden and revealed. Our aim was to pursue the proper relation between God hidden and revealed and compare them. In order to reach this aim, first, in Chapter V, we examined two contradictory views scholars, interpreting Hiddenness I and Hiddenness II in Luther as identical, or antithetical. In our analysis of Luther, we found the relation in Hiddenness I to be "identical" and the relation in Hiddenness II to be "unity in contradiction" through the *Divine paradox*. This distinction between Hiddenness I and Hiddenness II along with Luther's view on the *Divine paradox* was helpful to harmonize the contradictory views of scholars who see the relation as either "identical" or "antithetical." In addition, we examined various facets of the relation between God hidden and revealed such as the relation between Hiddenness I and Hiddenness II, between God's love and wrath, between law and gospel, between the image of a God of Love and the image of a God of Predestination. In the case of Calvin, in Chapter VI, we focussed on the relation between the accommodated God and God himself, a relation of continuity in discontinuity. We found a great ravine between them, but at the same time, accommodation reflects a taste of truth of God himself. In particular, Calvin shatters all apparent contradictions surrounding 'capricious God *ex lex*' in *potentia absoluta*', 'God with two different wills', 'God who changes his will', and 'God as the author of evil', and 'God as an unjust and unreliable judge', and thus demonstrate God's unity in apparent contradiction. As a result of our inquiries in Chapters V and VI, we find much common ground in Luther and Calvin on the relation of God hidden and revealed. At the same time,

we have noted their distinctive theological method and emphases which imbue theology of each with a characteristic color. On this basic conclusion, we can proceed toward more concrete comparison.

First, from the analysis in preceding chapters, it is clear that Luther and Calvin have some common ideas in the relation of Hiddenness I and Hiddenness II. Both understand that Hiddenness I and Hiddenness II are not only distinctive ((1)~(5)), but also inseparable ((6)~(7)): (1) there is distinction between hiddenness in revelation (Hiddenness I) and hiddenness beyond revelation (Hiddenness II); (2) more specifically, Hiddenness I is related to the knowledge of God in Christ, but Hiddenness II refers to the knowledge of God beyond Christ; (3) unlike Hiddenness I, Hiddenness II mainly speaks of a God of predestination; (4) the eye of faith penetrates into Hiddenness I, but it is blocked against the thick cover of Hiddenness II; (5) the guidance of the Holy Spirit is limited to Hiddenness I—even the lamp of the Holy Spirit does not shine in the precinct of Hiddenness II; (6) Hiddenness I and Hiddenness II are based on a Christological perspective—Christ is the way or ladder to the hidden God. When we take hold of Christ, he will lead us to the hidden God; (7) they are based on one and the same God because the God of Hiddenness I is none other than the God of Hiddenness II.

I have asserted my opposition to Reinhold Seeberg, Max Weber, Ernst Troeltsch, and Randall Zachman's sharp dichotomy between Luther's God of love and forgiveness and Calvin's God of predestination and majesty. Double predestination is not limited to Calvin. Luther is in basic unity with Calvin concerning the doctrine. In a sense, Luther is more sensitive about and more afraid of the hidden God who damns sinners to eternal perdition than Calvin. Sometimes, Luther goes so far as to tremble and feel horrified at the thought of the predestinating God with sovereign will. In his *Lectures on Romans*, Luther evidently supports both election and reprobation with several passages in the Bible. This idea of

double predestination becomes more systemized and sophisticated in *The Bondage of the Will*. As for some scholars' opinion that Luther made a transition from a God of predestination to a God of love in his later life, I showed that Luther did not give up or annul his previous view of a God of predestination represented in *The Bondage of the Will*. What is changed is the emphasis on the way to the hidden God through the revealed God, or the way to get the conviction of predestination through faith. Fundamentally, Luther intends to harmonize both of them.

Likewise, it is too hasty and misleading to define Calvin's God merely as a God of predestination, devouring people with consuming fire and damning people into perdition with his inscrutable will, rather than a God of love, mercy, and forgiveness as revealed in his Word. Above all, some critics' view that Calvin's God is a God of despotic severity or merciless predestination loses ground because Calvin's doctrine of predestination was intended to emphasise God's grace. Besides, in Calvin's view, damnation into perdition is due to the just judgement of their horrible sin and ignorance of God's mercy of forgiveness.³³⁷ The tenor of Calvin in his doctrine of predestination is to keep a symmetrical balance between love (in election) and justice (in reprobation). Therefore, it is proper to say that for both Luther and Calvin God is not only a God of love, mercy, and forgiveness but also a God of predestination and majesty.

This is true of the general relation between God hidden and revealed. Luther and Calvin try to keep the balance between the hidden and revealed God, instead of ignoring or abolishing one side for the other. Luther and Calvin believe that the hidden God and the revealed God are none other than one and the same God. For Calvin, the universal benevolence of the revealed will and the incomprehensible secret of the hidden will are none other than one and the same reality of God. The apparent contradiction lies in our

³³⁷ *Inst.* III.xxiii.3.

defective eyes. Luther and Calvin sharply distinguish between the human eye and God's eye. All the difference between God hidden and revealed is in our limited eyesight. Both understand that the human eye gives only the apparent contradiction between God hidden and revealed, but the eye of God just sees the real unity of God behind the apparent contradiction.

In the relation between God hidden and revealed, we find in Luther a more remarkable tension between God hidden and revealed than in Calvin. Luther's paradox is more piercing and striking than Calvin's. Luther shows more agonizing concern about the conflict between what appears to be two different wills of the *Deus absconditus* and the *Deus revelatus*. Rather than any tempering or compromising efforts, in a crude way Luther depicts a sharp antithesis in God hidden and revealed. Luther sometimes pushes the theological perplexities in the Bible into an antithetically juxtaposed relation between God hidden and revealed: "God wills many things that he does not disclose in his Word;"³³⁸ "God does not will the death of a sinner in his word—but he does it by that inscrutable will;"³³⁹ "the *Deus incarnatus* must find himself reduced to tears as he sees the *Deus absconditus* consigning men to perdition."³⁴⁰ Here, we feel as if two different Gods take antithetical attitudes. The contradiction between two statements deepens the contradiction between God hidden and revealed. This is the very point where Luther reminds us most of Marcion's two different Gods with two different wills. In extreme cases, Luther is forced to concede that behind the merciful God who is revealed in the Cross of Christ there may well be a hidden God whose intention are diametrically opposite, even "sinister". Therefore, Luther goes so far as to urge believers to turn their eyes away from the *Deus absconditus*, who elects and damns, and focus them on the *Deus revelatus*, who has shown a merciful

³³⁸ LW 33.139-40. (*Bondage of the Will*)

³³⁹ Ibid.

³⁴⁰ LW 33.146. (*Bondage of the Will*)

face in Jesus Christ. Pannenberg sees in Luther's *The Bondage of Will*, a serious tension between the hidden God and the revealed God.³⁴¹ McGrath understands that, at a logical level, Luther's argument inevitably makes theology an irrelevance, because any statement which can be made on the basis of Divine revelation may be refuted by appealing to a hidden and inscrutable God, whose will probably contradict that of the revealed God.³⁴² We can not deny that these views reflect some facets of Luther's view. Luther vividly feels the apparently sharp tension and colliding contradiction between God hidden and revealed and is faithful to his theological instinct by describing those contradictory elements as they are rather than rationalize or systemize them.

Unlike Luther, Calvin shows some significant differences in treating this matter, especially in relation to the theological puzzle surrounding two poles of God's universal love and God's double predestination. While Luther feels some clear contradictions between God's hidden will and revealed will, Calvin adamantly remarks that it is "*childish folly*" to say that these two are opposed,³⁴³ and continuously makes effort to show that there is no contradiction between them. Calvin believes that Scripture supports this *reconciliation* of these two notions: "I have elsewhere explained how Scripture *reconciles* the two notions that all are called to repentance and faith by outward preaching, yet the spirit of repentance and faith is not given to all."³⁴⁴ This shows the clear contrast with Luther who pushes the contradiction into sharply juxtaposed wills between God hidden and revealed. Calvin is reluctant to raise the difference between God hidden and revealed into a sure and sharp antithesis. Instead of a *sharp antithesis*, Calvin aims at showing God's unity in apparent diversity. Calvin makes an incessant effort to shatter these apparent contradictions so that he may harmonize and reconcile them. Calvin's efforts are enormous

³⁴¹ W. Pannenberg, "Der Einfluss der Anfechtungserfahrung auf den Prädestinationsbegriff Luthers", *KuD*, III (1957), 109-139.

³⁴² McGrath, *The Theology of the Cross*, 165-167.

³⁴³ *Comm. on 1 Tim.* 2:4-6.

and pertinacious. He is not tired in shattering all potentially contradictory elements one by one. As we have seen in Chapter VI that he shatters notions of a ‘capricious God *ex lex* in *potentia absoluta*’; ‘God with two different wills’; ‘God who changes his will’; ‘God as the author of evil’; ‘God as an unjust and unreliable judge.’

In Luther and Calvin’s concrete method to solve the apparent contradiction between God hidden and revealed, we find some difference. While Luther tries to pursue a solution to the contradiction between God hidden and revealed mainly in the light of glory, Calvin appeals to all three kinds of lights: light of nature (reason), light of faith, and light of glory. For Luther, the most significant method based on the light of glory is the *Divine paradox*. Luther elevates God’s contradiction into the *Divine paradox*, where while contradiction is still vividly alive in human reason, unity is seen from the Divine perspective. In the light of the *Divine paradox*, we can understand Luther’s urge to turn one’s eyes away from the *Deus absconditus*, the hidden God who elects and damns, and focus them on the *Deus revelatus*, the revealed God who has shown a merciful face in Jesus Christ. Peter Vardy aptly expressed, “Luther’s thought is rooted in paradoxes.”³⁴⁵ Luther enjoys raw paradox itself, not refined or tempered by any theological efforts. He realizes that paradox is the best way to catch the elusive reality of God in human understanding. While Luther, rather than shatter the apparent contradiction, lapses into a totally different level of God’s mystery to find inner unity, Calvin tries to make the contradiction more understandable. For Luther, these contradictory aspects are described in a more acute, and, sometimes, more raw and crude way. However, Calvin tries to systematize those paradoxes to make us understand their hidden truth in spite of their apparent contradiction. Calvin attacks God’s contradiction to shatter it logically and tries to find some harmonizing points. Therefore, Ronald Wallace indicates that “Calvin finds *justification for any contradiction* which he

³⁴⁴ *Inst.* III.xxii.10.

³⁴⁵ Peter Vardy, *Luther*, 88.

appears to show, in the doctrine of an apparent double will in God.”³⁴⁶ Calvin’s efforts to shatter these apparent contradictions or unravel the theological puzzle could also be compared to a melting pot, where all contradictions are put in and made into unity of God with one and simple will. Calvin thoroughly resorts to various methods using all three kinds of light.

First, in terms of *the light of nature (reason)*, we can find many kinds of Calvin’s efforts. Above all, in my view, Calvin’s greatest effort to shatter the apparent contradictions between God hidden and revealed will be the idea of *accommodation*. In a sense, Calvin’s accommodation can be interpreted as God’s effort to adapt the invisible, ineffable, and seemingly irrational God into our nature or reason for the Divine benevolent purpose. Calvin’s accommodation provides him with a systematic resolution to many of the seemingly contradictory expressions in the Bible, and justifies God’s unity in spite of apparent diverse aspects of God’s will. As for the seeming divergences in the two testaments about God’s will, Calvin explains how God seems to have different wills according to the ages through the concept of accommodation. God wanted to accommodate himself to “men’s capacity, which is varied and changeable” by changing “the outward form or manner” though he has not changed in his will which is one and simple.

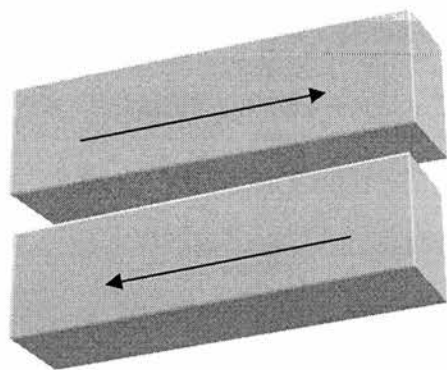
I reply that God ought not to be considered changeable merely because he accommodated diverse forms to different ages, as he knew would be expedient for each... Thus, God’s constancy shines forth in the fact that he taught the same doctrine to all ages, and has continued to require the same worship of his name that he enjoined from the beginning. In the fact that he has changed the outward form and manner, he does not show himself subject to change. Rather, he has accommodated himself to men’s capacity, which is varied and changeable.³⁴⁷

³⁴⁶ Wallace, *Calvin, Geneva, and the Reformation*, 277. [Italics mine]

³⁴⁷ *Inst.* II.xi.13.

Here what is changed is not the content (God himself) but his outward forms (modes of accommodation or mask), and this difference can be understood in the perspective of accommodation. For Calvin, accommodation has the effect of mitigating the sharp collision between reality and appearance. It is reasonable to suppose that the immutable God looks changeable in the prism of accommodation. Calvin, through the means of accommodation, compares such changeable aspects to “outward form or manner” and God’s real attributes to “its inner contents”. In brief, the concept of accommodation explains why God looks variable in spite of his one reality.

Second, Calvin’s appeal to *the light of nature* can be found in his appeal to *dimensional difference*. Statements that look contradictory may not be contradictory. They just belong to different dimensions. They can stand together, without colliding with each other. The picture below illustrates this. The direction of the arrows would appear to collide and be contradictory if seen in one dimension. But in fact, because they belong to different dimensions, the apparent collision or contradiction can be cleared up.



[Diagram 6]

If we investigate more closely, we find that Calvin depends on this logic in many ways. As we have seen in Chapter VI,³⁴⁸ Calvin appeals to several dimensional differences, such as universal will to save all vs. special election; irrevocable decree vs. conditional decree; universal invitation vs. effective calling; God’s providential dimension vs. legal dimension,

³⁴⁸ See the above Chapter VI.2.b. “Pursuing Unity by Shattering Contradictions: Unity in Contradiction”.

etc. For instance, Calvin enumerates many cases of the collision between “God’s providential dimension” and his “legal dimension” and suggests their harmony. The example he takes is that “a good son wills that his father live, whom God wills to die and a bad son wills that his father die and God wills this.”³⁴⁹ Here we find a logical conflict between the filial piety God orders in his law and God’s providence. However, the conflict can be understood and harmonized, on the ground that they do not belong to the same dimension. Another significant difference is between those of “purpose” and “instrument”. To make God immune from the evil which is done through his will, Calvin refers to a distinction between purpose and instrument: God uses human evil for his righteousness, as in the case of Pharaoh. God uses Satan to execute his just judgement as the instrument of God’s wrath,³⁵⁰ when evil spirit troubles Saul [1 Sam. 16:14] and “blinds the minds of unbelievers” [II Cor. 4:4]. God works in an ineffable way so that he may be totally immune from evil in using his evil instrument. For God, they are not in a same dimension colliding each other. For a more complex example, Calvin explains diverse dimensions of motives in an event. He takes the example of how God, Satan, and human beings work together in one event with different motives. Job recognizes that the Lord has taken away what has been seized through the Chaldeans [Job 1:21]. Calvin indicates three different motives can explain how Satan is not associated with God and God is not the author of evil: “The Lord’s purpose is to exercise the patience of His servant by calamity; Satan endeavors to drive him to desperation; the Chaldeans strive to acquire gain from another’s property contrary to law and right.”³⁵¹

Third, Calvin’s logical effort or appeal to *the light of nature* can be found in his method of *clarification of terms*. When God said in I Tim 2:4-6, “who [God] wants all men

³⁴⁹ *Inst.* I.xviii.3.

³⁵⁰ *Inst.* I.xviii.2:..II.iv.2.

³⁵¹ *Inst.* II.iv.2.

to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth”, Calvin clarifies the term “all” as “classes of men” or “rank”, not as “persons”.

The universal term all must always be referred to classes: of men, and not to persons; as if he had said, that not only Jews, but Gentiles also, not only persons of humble rank, but princes also, were redeemed by the death of Christ. Since, therefore, he wishes the benefit of his death to be common to all, an insult is offered to him by those who, by their opinion, shut out any person from the hope of salvation.³⁵²

Besides, against the criticism that Isaiah describes God as the author of peace and evil, Calvin distinguishes between author of evil as punishment and author of evil as guilt.³⁵³

Next, Calvin’s resort to *the light of faith* can be found in Calvin’s reliance on his theological belief in God as to God’s will, God’s attributes, and God’s providence. Calvin finds God’s will in everything. Even in evil, Calvin finds God’s will, which is more than passive allowance. In his arguments surrounding God’s “two contrary wills”, Calvin struggles with the apparent contradiction that “by his secret plan he decrees what he has openly forbidden by law,”³⁵⁴ or that God wills and does not will the same thing. In this struggle, Calvin sticks to his view of God that “God’s will is not at war against itself” to solve the apparent contradiction. For Calvin, his view of God—God’s will, God’s attributes, and God’s providence—is his final resort to solve all apparent contradiction surrounding God’s will and providence and predestination. The typical statements which Calvin uses to defend God’s unity against contradiction and his justice against his apparent tyrannical injustice are as follows.

³⁵² *Comm. on 1 Tim.* 2:4-6.

³⁵³ *Comm. on Isa.* 45:7.

³⁵⁴ *Inst.* I.xviii.3.

- (1) "Yet God's will is not therefore at war with itself, nor does it change..."³⁵⁵
- (2) "God's attributes such as power and justice cannot be separated."³⁵⁶
- (3) "God's will is so much the highest rule of righteousness."³⁵⁷
- (4) "God could make good even out of evil."³⁵⁸

These are a matter of belief beyond logical proof. However, for Calvin, these play the significant role of vindicating God's unity in the apparent contradiction. Through these, Calvin praises God's wonderful way to use the deeds of the godless for his righteous purpose, while immune to any reproach, such as the matter of responsibility or being called the author of evil. Calvin admires Augustine's exclamation: "Who does not tremble at these judgements, where God works even in evil men's hearts whatever he wills, yet renders to them according to their deserts?"³⁵⁹ Based on these, Calvin avers that God cannot be a tyrant even in his doctrine of election. "God's will is so much the highest rule of righteousness that whatever he wills, by the very fact that he wills it, must be considered righteous."³⁶⁰

Calvin is humble enough to ask for *the light of glory*. It is significant to know that Calvin appeals to the light of glory not because he realized that his appeal to the light of nature and faith is futile or in vain, but because he has a firm belief that God's mystery is still elusive in spite of all his tireless, logical explanations. Calvin realizes that, in spite of all his efforts to shatter contradictions, God's mysteries are not exhaustive, but some mystery still remains at a deeper level, just as another skin of onion inside is found when its skin is peeled off. He compensates and completes his effort to shatter the contradictory

³⁵⁵ Ibid.

³⁵⁶ *Sermons on Job* 23:1-7, 415.

³⁵⁷ *Inst.* III.xxiii.2.

³⁵⁸ *Inst.* I.xviii.

³⁵⁹ *Inst.* I.xviii.4. Here Calvin cites Augustine, *On Grace and Free Will*, xxi. 42. (MPL 44.907; tr. NPNF V. 462)

elements of God hidden and revealed by kneeling down before God's mystery. Calvin asserts that the reason why "the will of God is exhibited to us in two ways" is that "our minds do not fathom the deep abyss of secret election."

If it be objected, that it is absurd to suppose the existence of two wills in God, I reply, we fully believe that his will is simple and one; but as *our minds do not fathom the deep abyss of secret election*, in accommodation to the capacity of our weakness, the will of God is exhibited to us in two ways.³⁶¹

As for some final incomprehensible questions such as the ultimate "why" (Why was God pleased to elect some, not the others, and why one, not another?³⁶² Or why has God created those whom he unquestionably foreknew would go to destruction?³⁶³) Calvin leaves them to God's absolute providence which is none of our business. God's mystery is Calvin's final place to resolve the incomprehensible paradox as the ultimate key to the logical conflict. Like Luther, logical contradiction is for Calvin only an apparent contradiction in our limited comprehension. Calvin's shattering effort is completed in his resort to God's mystery. Just as Luther attributes the apparent contradiction to our limited eyesight and makes it clear that there is no contradiction in God, Calvin attributes the apparent contradiction to our mental capacity and makes it clear that God's will is just one and simple will, though it appears manifold.³⁶⁴ Therefore, it follows that both Luther and Calvin interpret two contrary wills as a matter of human perception rather than that of God's being. In sum, Luther and Calvin anchor on "apparent contradiction and inner unity."

³⁶⁰ *Inst.* III.xxiii.2.

³⁶¹ *Comm. on Matt.* 23:37.

³⁶² *Inst.* III.ii.35.

³⁶³ *Inst.* III.xxiii.5.

These different emphases on God hidden and revealed in Luther and Calvin lead them to paint their view of faith with different colors. Luther speaks of a double movement of faith in God hidden and revealed. The first movement of faith is characterized as “flight to flee (*fugere*) *ad deum contra deum* (to God against God)”. This reflects Luther’s emphasis on the sharp antithesis between the hidden God and the revealed God. The driving force of this movement comes from faith’s reaction on Wrath II—God’s eternal wrath and perdition. For Luther, Wrath II was intended for unbelievers with “a hard and callous” heart who are “unmoved by any preaching of repentance, like iron mountains in a great storm.”³⁶⁵ The angry God “smashes” them with “a rod of iron”, instead of the remedy of mercy.³⁶⁶ Our nature has no ability to escape this terrible wrath of God because “human nature forever flees, and yet it does not escape but must thus remain condemned in wrath, sin, death, and hell.”³⁶⁷ However, to believers, the story is different. They are safe from the threat of Wrath II. Though Satan makes a sinister effort to make them run to the naked and absolute God and thus destroy them,³⁶⁸ they flee “to the revealed God” and find a refuge in him. Luther urges us to say when the Devil wants to frighten us with God’s wrath and judgement, with death and hell: “As for me, I am determined to listen to what the Gospel says to me. There I find a Man whose name is Jesus Christ. To Him I will bind myself with heart and ears, and learn what He says and does.”³⁶⁹ It follows that Luther’s faith takes on the tint of *ad deum contra deum* (to God against God). Therefore, as Gerrish said, it is “movement”,³⁷⁰ whose dynamic aspect of faith makes our faith fresh and active. Luther’s faith is an endless effort to set anchor to “the gracious God” who is the revealed God in Christ. Another movement, distinguished from the direction Gerrish understood, is directed

³⁶⁴ *Inst.* I.xviii.3.

³⁶⁵ *LW* 12.316. (Psalm 51:1)

³⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁷ *LW* 19.72. (Jonah 2:2); *LW* 19.72. (Jonah 2:2)

³⁶⁸ *LW* 12.312. (Psalm 51:1)

³⁶⁹ *LW* 24.140. (John 14:20)

³⁷⁰ Gerrish, “‘To the unknown God’: Luther and Calvin on the Hiddenness of God”, 147-8.

from the wrathful God to the same wrathful God to find mercy in his wrath. This direction is related to Wrath I—Divine wrath for love or correction. The typical case is found in his *Commentary in Jonah*. Here, Luther understands that our “nature shrinks back and cannot see the rays of mercy in the clouds of Divine wrath.”³⁷¹ Luther understands that our nature feels an angry tyrant in God’s anger and punishment. Nature cannot surmount the obstacle posed by this wrath and regards Him his enemy. However, Luther urges people to turn to the wrathful God, instead of fleeing from him. “Take recourse to the Lord, Yes, to the Lord, and to no other. *Turn to the very one who is angry and punishes, and resort to no other.*”³⁷² Luther convinces them that they will find “mercy amid wrath” with the aid of the Holy Spirit:

The Lord’s answer consists in this, that you will soon find your situation improved; you will soon perceive the wrath abating and the punishment lightened...the heart finds solace when it hastens to the angry God with the aid of the Holy Spirit and seeks mercy amid wrath, lets God punish and at the same time dares to find comfort in His goodness.³⁷³

How about Calvin? I believe that Calvin’s relatively stronger posture to prove God’s unity between God hidden and revealed—they are one and the same God with one will—brings about weakening the sharply contrasting bipolarity of God hidden and revealed. This enfeebles the motivation of the flight *ad deum contra deum*. Therefore, we can say that it resembles Luther’s second movement rather than the first movement. It takes on the pattern of “A to A” rather than “A to B”. While Luther’s “flight *ad deum* to *contra deum*” reminds us of a child’s running from the angry father to the consoling mother beside him, Calvin’s flight reminds us of a child’s asking for a father’s forgiveness and love when he punishes his child with anger. Of course, Luther does not think that father and mother are

³⁷¹ LW 12.316. (Psalm 51:1)

³⁷² LW 19.72. (Jonah 2:2)

³⁷³ LW 19.72-3. (Jonah 2:2)

different persons, because he insists that they look different, but they are one and the same God. However, we should remember that before he resorts to the ultimate unity, Luther first juxtaposes two seemingly contradictory Gods as if they were different in such a shocking way as to jeopardize and make the unity of God suspect. Calvin struggles harder against theological contradiction with the conviction that God is one and the same God and that God's contradictions such as different wills are just illusion caused by our limited eyesight. Further, we should take notice that, while Luther, in his frame of flight *ad deum contra deum*, understands Christ as some refuge or shelter where we can flee and hide from the dreadful, hidden God full of wrath and Majesty, Calvin emphasises that Christ is the aid, medium and foundation to prevent us from being consumed by the hidden God in heaven and to let us dare proceed in confidence to the hidden God.

Therefore, Calvin's faith encourages us to flee from God's wrath to the same God's mercy as we see in Luther's second direction of faith: awareness of God's wrath upon their sins does not lead them to despair of God's mercy but rather leads them both to repent and flee to God's mercy: "Therefore, at the same time they conceive him to be at once angry and merciful toward them, or toward their sins. For they unfeignedly pray that his wrath be averted, while with tranquil confidence they nevertheless *flee to him for refuge*."³⁷⁴ In other places, a similar idea is repeated: "Because the Law was given to cite slumbering consciences to the judgement-seat, that, through fear of death, they might flee for refuge to God's mercy."³⁷⁵ For Calvin, the God who punishes and judges is none other than the God who can forgive and embrace with his great love.³⁷⁶ Without knowing of God's forgiveness, it is impossible for the sinner not to flee from God. The real purpose of God's judgement, Calvin understands, is not to "look for hiding places to flee from the presence

³⁷⁴ *Inst.* III.ii.12.

³⁷⁵ *Comm. on Exod.* 19:16.

³⁷⁶ *Comm. on Acts* 3:18.

of the judge”, but to “go straight to God to ask forgiveness.”³⁷⁷

Calvin’s faith is similar to Luther’s idea of transformation rather than Luther’s flight.³⁷⁸ Luther says, “Unbelief makes a judge and enemy out of God and the Father...Faith makes a God and Father out of enemy and judge.”³⁷⁹ When we begin to have faith, Luther’s hidden God of terror and severe judgement which looks a dark mystery to our sinful and frail nature begins to change into a God of love and grace: from “against us” (*contra nobis*), into “for us” (*pro nobis*).³⁸⁰ Calvin understands that “all thinking about God without Christ is a vast abyss which immediately swallows up our thoughts.”³⁸¹ This shows that the prism of Christ drastically transforms the image of God. More clearly, Calvin speaks of God’s transformation: “it is God’s nature to be gentle, longsuffering, and loving, but when God disciplines his children and shows himself hard and sharp toward us, he *transforms* himself (*se transfigure*) and after a sort does not follow his nature.”³⁸² I believe that “flight” and “transformation” are based on different premises. While the concept of “transformation” is anchored more on the idea of the sameness of God hidden and revealed (the wrath of God is none other than the revealed God), the idea of flight is based on a distinction between God hidden and revealed. Transformation does not intend to separate God into two different Gods—a God of wrath *versus* a God of love, but only perceives the deeper love of God *under* the mask of wrath.³⁸³ Calvin’s emphasis on the unity between God hidden and revealed, between a God of love and a God of wrath, is in connection with the *harmonious coexistence of the two aspects* in one and the same God. Calvin’s faith becomes stable and healthy when its conviction on God’s love and

³⁷⁷ *Comm. on John* 8:9.

³⁷⁸ See the above Chapter V.8.b. “The Hidden God and Our Faith”.

³⁷⁹ *LW* 9.96-97. (Deut 8:17)

³⁸⁰ *LW* 12.312. (Psalm 51:1)

³⁸¹ *Comm. on 1 Pet.* 1:20.

³⁸² *Sermons on Job* 36:15-19, 664.

³⁸³ We can compare “flight *ad deum contra deum*” to a child’s running from the angry father to the consoling mother beside him. On the other hand, “transformation” compared to the father who weeps and caresses with love after he punishes his child when his child repents.

mercy is moderated and reinforced by its awareness of God's wrath and judgement. At the same time, just as Luther understands love as God's deeper nature, Calvin puts the priority of the true knowledge of God on God's love rather than wrath: "the first thing respecting God is, that we should acknowledge him to be beneficent and bountiful...Therefore, the true knowledge of God begins here, that is, when we know him to be merciful to us. For what would it avail us to know that God is just, unless we had a previous knowledge of his mercy and gratuitous goodness?"³⁸⁴

In relation to the Trinity, Luther and Calvin are in mutual agreement that each person of the Trinity wears a peculiar mask; and both divide the Trinity into the accommodated Trinity and the hidden Trinity—in other words, a double parallel structure.³⁸⁵ The Holy Spirit, for example, is distinguished into the accommodated God with a mask and the hidden God without a mask. The tongues of fire and a dove are masks the Holy Spirit wore to accommodate himself to us. Luther and Calvin speak of the Holy Spirit in his incomprehensible Divine essence as the hidden God. Calvin understands that the Holy Spirit is the link between God hidden and revealed (Christ and God in heaven). Besides, the incarnate Son of God, too, wears a double mask: one mask of the hidden Son of God and the other mask of the hidden Father in heaven. We find Jesus as the hidden God in Luther and Calvin. When Luther was a monk under the strict monastic order, he understood Jesus Christ himself as the hidden God who is a stern and terrible judge making people flee like a devil: "I knew Christ as none other than a stern judge, from whose face I wanted to flee, and yet could not...an angry judge, yes, an executioner and a devil in our hearts."³⁸⁶ He felt that Christ was "indeed the first devils from whom everyone fled in fear

³⁸⁴ *Comm. on Jer. 9:24.*

³⁸⁵ For a full discussion, see the above Chapter V. 7. "The Relation between the Holy Spirit and the Hidden God" (for Luther); Chapter VI. 5. "The Position and Role of the Holy Spirit in God Hidden and Revealed" (for Calvin).

³⁸⁶ *WA 38.148. (Die Kleine Antwort, 1533).* See also *LW 24:24. (John 14:2-4); LW 24:348. (John 16:8-11)*

and hatred.”³⁸⁷ He imagined Christ as “a severe and terrible judge, portrayed as seated on a rainbow.”³⁸⁸ How about Calvin? Calvin clearly distinguishes “Jesus as the hidden God” from ‘Jesus as the revealed God’ by saying that “Christ is not better known to us with respect to His hidden Divinity than the Father,”³⁸⁹ or “...lest the Divine Majesty of Christ should terrify us.”³⁹⁰ At the same time, Jesus has not only the mask of the hidden Divinity of God the Son, but also the mask of the Father in heaven. According to Luther, “The incarnate Son of God is, therefore, the covering in which the Divine Majesty presents Himself to us with all His gifts, and does so in such a manner that there is no sinner too wretched to be able to approach Him with the firm assurance of obtaining pardon.”³⁹¹ Calvin too insists, “God is wholly found in Him...God has manifested himself to us fully and perfectly in Christ.”³⁹²

Finally, in the knowledge of God, both Luther and Calvin warn us of three kinds of mistaken methods of knowing God.³⁹³ The first is to try to stick to the surface of the mask, not seeing the actor behind the mask. For Luther, reason cannot penetrate the mask into God’s hidden reality, but just stays on the mask. Reason itself cannot decipher the hidden God in a mask. Likewise, Calvin, in his *Commentary on Genesis*, states, “The greater part adheres to the creatures without any consideration of the Creator himself.” It is not a right way of knowing God to “apply the whole force of their mind to the consideration of nature, forgetful of God.”³⁹⁴ Calvin thinks it “a perverted study” to “be so occupied in the investigation of the secrets of nature, as never to turn the eyes to its Author.”³⁹⁵ The second case is to confuse the mask with God, and make the mask the idol. This is the

³⁸⁷ WA 33.540. (John 8:15). See also LW 24:24. (John 14:2-4); LW 24:116. (John 14:17)

³⁸⁸ LW 24:24. (John 14:2-4)

³⁸⁹ *Comm. on John* 14:10.

³⁹⁰ *Comm. on Rom.* 8:34.

³⁹¹ LW 2.46. (Gen 6:5.6)

³⁹² *Comm. on Col.* 2:9.

³⁹³ See the above Chapter I.5, V.8 for Luther’s view; Chapter II.8, VI.6 for Calvin’s view.

³⁹⁴ *Comm. on Gen.* “Argument”.

³⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

adoration of the mask, more exactly speaking, the deification of the mask.³⁹⁶ Luther clearly distinguishes God from his mask, saying “Therefore, we are skilled to distinguish between God and his mask. The world is not able to do this.”³⁹⁷ Likewise, Calvin regards confusing accommodation modes and God as an idol, which comes from human brute stupidity “to pant after visible figures of God, and thus to form gods of wood, stone, gold, silver, or other dead and corruptible matter.”³⁹⁸ The third type of error is to try to see God directly without the mask. For Luther, “nothing is more dangerous than to stray into heaven with our idle speculations, there to investigate God in His incomprehensible power, wisdom, and majesty.”³⁹⁹ Likewise, Calvin thinks it is not the right way “to aspire with a foolish and insane curiosity to inquire into his *Essence*”.⁴⁰⁰

Both reject seeing the naked God directly. Both recognize that we cannot bear exposure to the glory of Divine Majesty. Both criticize theological attempts to see God directly. Especially Luther characterizes this attempt to see the glory of God as “theology of glory”. For Luther, “nothing is more dangerous than to stray into heaven with our idle speculations, there to investigate God in His incomprehensible power, wisdom, and majesty.”⁴⁰¹ Likewise, for Calvin, any theological effort to see God directly will be doomed to fail. Just as the direct sunshine makes our feeble eyes blind, our attempt to penetrate his essence will make us blind. Anyone who attempts to penetrate God’s will pursues a knowledge of God which, “content with empty speculation, merely flits in the brain.”⁴⁰² Calvin clarifies that our concern is to know “what he wills to be toward us” rather than “who he is in himself”.⁴⁰³ Both stand on the common ground that they fully

³⁹⁶ LW 26.95. (Gal 2:6).

³⁹⁷ WA 40¹.174.3. = LW 26:95. (Gal 2:6) Cf. LW 14.114. (Psalm 147.13); LW 24.67. (John 14:10)

³⁹⁸ Inst. I.xi.1.

³⁹⁹ LW 26.28-9. (Gal 1:3)

⁴⁰⁰ Comm. on Gen. “Argument”.

⁴⁰¹ LW 26.28-9. (Gal 1:3)

⁴⁰² Inst.I.v.9.

⁴⁰³ Inst. III.ii.6.

realize the limitation of our knowledge of God due to God's incomprehensibility and our limited sense. Knowledge of "What is God?" is like toying with dull speculation.⁴⁰⁴ We are "incapable of understanding the mysteries of God."⁴⁰⁵

Luther and Calvin agree that the right way to get the true knowledge of God is through the mask or a symbol. The mask is like a cloud through which we can see the sun.⁴⁰⁶ God does not want us to penetrate into his naked majesty, but hides himself under a myriad of simple and tangible masks. God hides himself "under the mask" to reveal himself, and we can find this God "through the mask". In Luther's deeper understanding of the mask, the mask is not just a veil, but also a mirror to reveal God, which is the media of Divine revelation. Calvin agrees that we can know God only "through oblique light" or through his "coverings" or "veils". As we cannot see the sun itself, we cannot behold God's glory freely and directly. Therefore, God illuminates us obliquely, so that at least we see him from behind.⁴⁰⁷ The invisible God clothed himself in his works in the form of the familiar and visible image of the world, so that we can observe his presence in it.⁴⁰⁸ Paradoxically, we can observe his presence only when the invisible God covers or clothes himself in the form of the familiar and visible image of the world.⁴⁰⁹ More positively, Calvin urges people to "clothe him with this most beautiful attire" as soon as "the name of God sounds in our ears or a thought."⁴¹⁰ Jesus Christ is the most typical case of "seeing through the oblique light." "God is not to be *sought out* in His unsearchable height, for He dwells in light that is inaccessible (1 Timothy 6:16), but is to be known by us, in so far as He manifests himself in Christ."⁴¹¹

⁴⁰⁴ Quirinus Breen, "John Calvin and the Rhetorical Tradition", *Church History* 26 (1957): 10-11.

⁴⁰⁵ *Inst.* II.ii.21.

⁴⁰⁶ *WA* 45.522. = *LW* 24.67. (John 14:10)

⁴⁰⁷ *Comm. on Exod.* 33:21

⁴⁰⁸ *Comm. on Gen.* "Argument"

⁴⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴¹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹¹ *Comm. on II Cor.* 4:6.

Conclusion

The main purpose of my thesis has been a comparative study of the theme ‘God hidden and revealed’ in Luther and Calvin, with a focus on the relation between the hidden God and the revealed God. To reach this purpose, we first compared Hiddenness I (Part A) and then Hiddenness II (Part B) in Luther and Calvin. On the basis of these two parts, we explored the relation between God hidden and revealed in Luther and Calvin and their comparison (Part C). Our findings will be summed up in the following Section A. Based on our findings, we can conclude that Calvin has a well organized hidden God doctrine which is native to him as in Luther, and that both Luther and Calvin were convinced of God’s unity in his apparent contradiction. In particular, I emphasise that Calvin shares much with Luther in his view of the hidden God. Finally, I attached my evaluation of Luther and Calvin’s hidden God doctrine in the following Section B.

A. Summary

Luther and Calvin never met, though they had friends in common, particularly Philip Melancthon and Martin Bucer,¹ and they were separated by age, language, culture, and education. However, we find that their ideas share more than we would expect. Calvin thought very highly of Luther. As Wendel indicates, “Calvin always professed the liveliest admiration for Luther, of whose works he had read a whole series quite early in life—that is of those accessible to him.”² Kerr comments that while the two reformers never met,

¹ Steinmetz, *Luther in Context*, 85.

² Wendel, *Calvin*, 131.

Calvin always treasured his friendship with Luther.”³ Calvin said of Luther: “Although he were to call me a devil, I should still not the less hold him in such honor that I must acknowledge him to be an illustrious servant of God.”⁴

Through history, Calvin’s doctrine of the hidden God has received less attention than Luther’s. Gerrish admits that he is not aware of any discussion that deals with Calvin’s hiddenness in relation with the various types and contexts of hiddenness distinguished by Luther scholars.⁵ Recently, Gerrish’s article, “‘To the unknown God’: Luther and Calvin on the hiddenness of God” attracted scholars’ concern for Calvin and Luther’s idea of hiddenness of God. My emphasis is that the *Deus absconditus* takes no less a substantial part in Calvin’s theology than Luther’s, and that Calvin’s thoughts on the hiddenness of God parallel Luther’s in large parts. In fact, in his career, Pighius, Georgius, and Bolsec attacked him for the conflict between the hidden God and the revealed God. Against these attacks, Calvin became more elaborate and logical to defend the unity of God hidden and revealed. T.H.L. Parker, in his *Calvin’s Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*, rightly remarks that “the concept of *Deus absconditus* is as native to Calvin’s theology as it is to Luther’s.”⁶

Luther and Calvin’s hidden God theory can be interpreted as the revolt against a medieval spirit, summed up as a ‘theology of glory’ by Luther at the 1518 Heidelberg Disputation. It attempts and pursues the knowledge of God in his naked glory, purity, and majesty in a direct way, as mystical aspiration does. Luther and Calvin show a common warning that it is a dangerous attempt because God in naked glory and majesty will consume whoever dares to see him directly with their overpowering glory and holiness. Luther and Calvin held the common view that the hidden God can be seen only through the

³ Kerr, ed. *A Compend of Luther’s Theology*, v.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Gerrish, *The Old Protestantism and the New*, 341. (= a footnote of “To the Unknown God: Luther and Calvin on the Hiddenness of God”)

hidden places (mask) or the modes of accommodation such as nature, the Cross, the Bible, and the Word and Sacraments. It is like our seeing the sun better through the cloud or oblique light. Luther and Calvin use predestination as the source of deeper hiddenness of God.

Luther's concept of the hidden God is put on the matrix of his central theme of theology of the Cross. Luther's God in the theology of the Cross is characterized as "God wearing mask" in relation to his creature. Luther understands that the hidden God is none other than the revealed God in that God in the mask reveals himself to the believer, but still remains hidden to the unbelievers. Beyond revelation, there is deeper hiddenness that approaches us as a horrible and sometimes sinister being whose intentions remain concealed from us. Gerrish called this hiddenness Hiddenness II in contrast with Hiddenness I, which refers to the hiddenness in revelation. For Luther, the idea of Hiddenness II directly relates to the extreme extension of Hiddenness I, but has a clear distinction from Hiddenness I. Both Hiddenness I and Hiddenness II are based on the common paradoxical way God hidden and revealed works under the contrary forms: "Thus when God makes alive he does it by killing, when he justifies he does it by making men guilty, when he exalts to heaven, he does it by bringing down to hell."⁷ On this basis, Luther suddenly jumps over Hiddenness I into Hiddenness II by saying that God hides his eternal mercy under his *eternal wrath*. In Hiddenness II, we find the hidden God who looks contradictory to the revealed God in Christ. This God is the naked and absolute God whose glory and majesty we cannot bear. He is a God of pure anger and wrath. He is a God of predestination with the inscrutable will who does not deplore or take away death. He makes us damnable. He seems to delight in the torments of the miserable. He looks like a liar who does not keep his words. The hidden God ruthlessly pours his wrath enough to

⁶ T. H. L. Parker, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Knowledge of God* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1969), 27.

⁷ LW 33.62. (*Bondage of the Will*)

consign the sinner to the eternal perdition. The hidden God torments his created people as if he seemed to forget all his benevolent promise in Christ. Luther himself was surprised to find the harsh reality of the hidden God.

By contrast, Calvin's hidden God theory is based on accommodation. As Benin correctly notes in his book, *The Footprint of God*, "Calvin understood all of Scripture through the lens of accommodation."⁸ H. Jackson Forstman, in his book, *Word and Spirit*, judges accommodation to be Calvin's "most widely used exegetical tool".⁹ Among scholars, there is a growing awareness that accommodation is a central theme to cover Calvin's theology more extensively and efficiently. Accommodation is a very efficient tool to explain the conflicting ideas between God hidden and revealed in unity.

If the mask is the trademark of Luther's hidden God, accommodation can be Calvin's trademark. Of course, both masks and accommodation have the relation of ends and means. As Luther's God hides himself to reveal himself in the masks, Calvin's God accommodates himself to reveal himself. Calvin's God Crosses over the great valley between God and humanity—infinite vs. finite; immortal vs. mortal; eternal vs. transient; immeasurable vs. measurable; holy vs. sinful; and majesty and glory vs. humble and despicable. The purpose of Divine accommodation is to show his love for the creatures, save them, reveal his love and grace, and be familiar to them. Calvin's God accommodates to our poor comprehension, infirmity, sinfulness, barbarity, and culture. To accommodate himself, Calvin's God employs many kinds of Divine strategy. He condescends and belittles himself and takes upon the lowly form. He does not show his own glory and majesty as he is, but rather shows a levelled-down glory and majesty—that is, Divine lenity. He lifts up human beings to shake off our sluggishness and inertia and get a proper knowledge of God. He uses rhetoric such as symbols, signs, metaphors, and appropriates kinds of figurative

⁸ Benin, *The Footprint*, 192.

⁹ Forstman, *Word and Spirit*, 13.

communication. These are not only the media to bridge between God and human beings, but also the mirrors to show God's spiritual reality to our limited human comprehension.

Calvin's accommodation necessarily brings about hiddenness. First, we find some hiddenness when God curtails and reduces himself to accommodate himself to our limited understanding. In the process of accommodation, God does not reveal himself as he is, but refracts, obscures, transform, and reduces some Divine aspects, which our human frailty cannot bear. Second, we find some hiddenness in the masks or clothes which Calvin's God wears to accommodate himself—a kind of veiling of the "naked majesty". The naked God emerges from his hiddenness through Christ. "God would have remained hidden afar off if Christ's splendor had not beamed upon us."¹⁰ The flesh of Christ is the veil which the naked God wears [Cf. Phil. 2:5-7].¹¹ The third hiddenness comes from God's hiding his face. It is related to God's withdrawal rather than God's veil. We feel that this God hides his face, does not hear our prayer, and, being far away, does not come to help his people. It is faith which lets us rely on God's promise of grace and salvation in the darkness of God's absence.

The hidden God beyond accommodation is a naked and absolute God. We cannot approach him because of his glory and majesty, as we have seen in Luther. He is a God of predestination who elects some to salvation and abandons some to perdition by his inscrutable will. Like Luther's hidden God, he is hidden beyond Christ. He is a God of wrath, consuming sinners with fire, and making us dread with fear. He is a God of abyss and labyrinth. Anybody who is going to penetrate without Christ will fall into this abyss and labyrinth.

Luther and Calvin have common ideas about the relation between God and his mask (modes of accommodation). First, God is immanent in it. At the same time, God transcends

¹⁰ *Inst.* III.ii.2.

¹¹ *Inst.* II.xiii.2.

it. The mask cannot circumscribe God in it. The whole God, not a part of him, is in a mask, just as all the broken pieces of glasses reflect the perfect image, not a part. Calvin clearly states we have *no idea of its incarceration or confinement* in the Incarnation. God who adapted himself to the modes of accommodation are never fixed or confined in them. Luther and Calvin warn against any panentheistic tendency to melt the dualism of inside and outside—like fish in the water and the water in the fish, or, furthermore, a pantheistic misconception that God is the mask. For Luther and Calvin, God and his mask (or modes of accommodation) are inseparable, but should be distinguished.

Luther and Calvin's God does not lose Divinity in the masks or accommodation. For Luther, God is actively present in all creation and completely enters into it. But his Divine nature is not consumed in the reality of the world, keeping his Divinity in hiding himself in the masks.¹² The Christ in a myriad of masks keeps his perfect Divinity. In Calvin, accommodation does not weaken or detract from God's glory or majesty. Divinity is completely preserved by "not lessening, but concealing". The Incarnation demonstrates this. While God was incarnated and thus Christ emptied himself, "he continued to retain his Divinity entire though it was concealed under the veil of his flesh."¹³ His heavenly attributes and functions were not impaired at all.¹⁴

As for the matter of continuity between accommodation and God himself, Calvin understands that there coexists continuity and discontinuity—in other words, "continuity in discontinuity". First, there is a discontinuity due to the impassable ravine between God's accommodation and God himself. The knowledge we get through accommodation is not exactly same with that of God as he is. Accommodation calls for a lot of reduction or transformation of the knowledge of God because of the immense distance between God's

¹² *LW* 37.266. (Confession concerning Christ's Supper)

¹³ *Comm. Matt.* 17:9.

¹⁴ *Comm. on John* 1:14.

reality and our understanding. God's essence is incomprehensible and beyond our reason. Further, the accommodated expression is not appropriate to God's nature. However, Calvin, instead of driving the discrepancy to the extreme enough to harm the foundation of his whole theology, assures us that there is a strong unity between accommodation and God himself. Calvin's interpretation of the Ark, the burning bush, the vision of God in the temple, and the form of dove of the Holy Spirit show that those modes of accommodation which God granted us as the tokens to reveal himself are far from meaningless or empty or false signs. They stand for the real presence of God where God is really there so that we can meet him. Therefore, Calvin asserts that whenever God grants any token of His presence, God is undoubtedly present with us, and that He does not deceitfully expose the signs of His presence to men's eyes.¹⁵ In sum, God's accommodation given to us as the token of God's presence provides us with *a sure and substantial knowledge of God*, though they are not complete, but just a small taste in part. Luther would show an agreement for this idea of continuity because Luther, too, admits that when God is expressed in a childlike manner such as anthropomorphic expression (e.g. God has eyes, with which He beholds the poor; He has ears, with which He hears those who pray, etc.), God assures us of our meeting him. "When God reveals Himself to us, it is necessary for Him to do so through some such veil or wrapper and to say: Look! Under this wrapper you will be sure to take hold of Me."¹⁶

As for the distinction between the "revealed" and the "hidden" will of God, I do not agree with Brunner's view that "Calvin does not make Luther's distinction—which Luther feels to be so important—between the 'revealed' and the 'hidden' will of God."¹⁷ Calvin does not support Brunner's view. Calvin, like Luther, clearly distinguishes between the

¹⁵ *Comm. on Isa.* 6:1; *Exod.* 13:21.

¹⁶ *LW* 1.15. (Gen 1:2)

¹⁷ Brunner, *Dogmatics*, vol.1, *The Christians Dogmatics of God*, 325.

hidden will and the revealed will, as we see in his *Comm. on II Peter* 3:9 and *Comm. on Matt.* 23:37 and the *Inst* I.xvii.2.¹⁸ In particular, in the *Inst* I.xvii.2, he speaks of “another hidden will which may be compared to a deep abyss” clearly distinguished from “comprehended mystery” such as “law and gospel”.¹⁹

In the relation between Hiddenness I and Hiddenness II, Luther and Calvin share many common ideas. Both understand that while Hiddenness I belongs to the area of “what God has revealed”, Hiddenness II belongs to the area of “more than what God has revealed”. If we employ typical terms, for Luther, Hiddenness I refers to God *in the mask*, and Hiddenness II refers to God *without the mask*. In a similar way, for Calvin, Hiddenness I refers to God’s hiddenness *in accommodation*, and Hiddenness II refers to hiddenness *beyond accommodation*. Luther and Calvin share the idea that Hiddenness I and Hiddenness II are inseparably related, but they are distinct, though not divided. They agree that while Hiddenness I is related to Christ, Hiddenness II is related to the knowledge of God “out of Christ”.

More than Luther, Calvin develops a more elaborate theory of God “beyond law” on the basis of two concepts of God’s justice – Divine justice and creaturely justice. Calvin focusses on a great ravine and valley between “creaturely justice” and “Divine higher justice”.²⁰ At the same time, he concentrates on the relation between these two justices. In particular, in his *Sermons on Job*, Calvin puts these two justices in the balanced tension represented by ‘theoretical possibility’ and ‘practical possibility’: “God *could* judge and punish Job according to his higher secret justice”,²¹ but in fact he does not act according to “higher secret justice” but to “the created justice”. Through this tension, Calvin strives to harmonize God’s sovereign freedom and God’s love. In spite of Calvin’s more strenuous

¹⁸ See this thesis VI.2.b.2) “Against ‘God with Two Different Wills.’”

¹⁹ *Inst* I.xvii.2.

²⁰ *Inst*. III.xii.1.

²¹ *Sermons on Job* 23:1-7, 413.

struggle with God's justice than Luther, both have common ideas about these two justices. Both understand that the created justice is not perfect enough to satisfy his secret justice. Both have the view that the law is not so perfect or peerless a thing, and even angels cannot satisfy the Divine justice. Both believe that God cannot be God if he is fully understood within our human justice. Especially as for predestination, both find the justification of God's reprobation in this higher hidden justice.

As for the role of faith and the Holy Spirit in the doctrine of the hidden God, Luther and Calvin expressed startling similarity. They understand that we can follow the Holy Spirit as our guide in the area of Hiddenness I, but we cannot expect the Holy Spirit's guidance to push into the massive portal of Hiddenness II represented by "His hidden counsel". While the faithful are allowed to access the secret of Hiddenness I, Hiddenness II is forbidden and closed even to the faithful. In Hiddenness II, faith is not the tool for penetrating the mystery of the hidden will any more, but the tool to lead us to trust in God's trustworthiness in spite of God's unfathomable mysterious way. Therefore, Luther emphasises that "if faith lingers too long, tries to penetrate the mystery of the hidden will, it can only lose itself in the abyss of the unknown God."²²

Concerning God's wrath in Luther, Brunner and Barth show contrasting ideas. Brunner understands that, for Luther, wrath is a fundamental reality of God to the fallen people standing under the *Deus absconditus*, or the *Deus nudus*, who is unbearable to the creature. The *Deus nudus* has the terror of God apart from Christ. However, Barth believes that in spite of a hidden mystery behind his revelation due to his essential freedom, there is no God to be feared, or no terrible or naked God behind his revelation.²³ For Barth, God's wrath is just the veiling of God. It belongs to the hiddenness of God in Christ, and not to God whom one might fear apart from Christ, as Brunner insists. While Brunner

²² Gerrish, "To the Unknown God: Luther and Calvin on the Hiddenness of God", 140.

²³ Barth, *CD*, II/1 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1964), 236-237.

understands that wrath is the undeniable terrible reality of God, Barth interprets that wrath is just a mere expression of love in Christ. Here, we need some compromise. In Luther's understanding, both Barth and Brunner just show one aspect of the whole story. We need to focus on Luther's dual structure of God's wrath. In Hiddenness I and Hiddenness II, the wrath of Luther's hidden God has each different purpose. In Hiddenness I, God shows his wrath to correct us so that we are humble and find the revealed love and grace. By contrast, in Hiddenness II, God's wrath has no intention of correction. This kind of wrath is eternal horror because it consumes the sinner in the fire of hell forever. I attach the term Wrath I for the former, Wrath II for the latter. If Wrath I is God's "alien work" for our love or salvation, Wrath II is God's eternal damnation. If we say that Luther's Wrath II is closer to Brunner's severe and harsh reality beyond Christ, Luther's Wrath I will be closer to Barth's veiling of the hidden God.

I also argue against the view of scholars such as Reinhold Seeberg, Max Weber, Ernst Troeltsch and Zachman who characterized Luther's God as a God of love and forgiveness and Calvin's God as a God of wrath and predestination. Luther's God is not only a God of love, mercy and forgiveness, but also a God of predestination and just severity, who judges and damns people into perdition. At the same time, Calvin's God of predestination is not an "arbitrary or capricious despot" at all. Calvin's God is not only a God of predestination and majesty, but also a God of love and mercy. These two aspects are well balanced in Luther and Calvin's view of God. Further, even in predestination, what is accented is the symmetrical balance of God's love and wrath (of justice, not despotic severity). "To the gratuitous *love* with which the elect are embraced there corresponds on an equal and common level a *just severity* towards the reprobate."²⁴

²⁴ *On the Eternal Predestination of God*, v.1, 3.

I am also critical of Brunner's distinction between Luther and Calvin—"while Calvin as a dogmatic theologian not only follows but also intensifies Augustine's doctrine of predestination "in the sense of the '*gemina praedestinatio* (double predestination),' Luther turns away from Augustine's speculative theology of traditional doctrine of predestination driving men to despair and finds the true doctrine of predestination in the knowledge of election in Jesus Christ through faith."²⁵ Brunner limits the doctrine of double predestination to Calvin. But I argue that double predestination belongs not only to Calvin, but also to Luther. In his *Lectures on Romans* (1515-6), the young Luther clearly keeps the idea of double predestination. In *The Human Bondage of the Will* (1525), Luther in mid-career (1521-30) elaborates and strengthens this idea. Though Luther's emphasis shows some change in his *Commentary on Genesis* (1539), it is just transition of emphasis, not giving up or correcting his former view of God hidden and revealed. Luther not only places the unity of God within his Christology, but also keeps the tension between God hidden and revealed all through his theological works. Luther's later emphasis on the assurance through faith in Christ not only does not contradict the doctrine of double predestination, but also reconciles and goes together with it. Besides, it is not right for Brunner to limit "the true doctrine of predestination in the knowledge of election in Jesus Christ through faith"²⁶ only to Luther, and not to Calvin. Like Luther, Calvin realizes the terrible harsh reality of God's hiddenness surrounding the double decree to make people despair. Like Luther, Calvin realizes the serious effect it will have on weak people. Not less than Luther, Calvin emphasises the unity of God hidden and revealed, based on Christology. As much as Luther, Calvin emphasises assurance of election through faith in Christ. Calvin's ceaseless message in unity with Luther is that a God of predestination is none other than a God of love, grace, and forgiveness. Further, his doctrine of predestination was intended to

²⁵ Brunner, *Dogmatics*, vol. I, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 344-5.

²⁶ Brunner, *Dogmatics*, vol. I, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 344-5.

emphasise God's grace: "Until we know God's eternal election we cannot be sure that our salvation comes from the fountain of grace given to us without price."²⁷ Therefore, Calvin draws the conclusion that a God of predestination is a God of mercy and justice.

As for the relation between God's love and wrath, Luther shows that God's love is deeper nature of God than wrath, saying in a metaphorical way that God's love is concealed in "two thick hides or pelt" of wrath. Though Luther thinks of love as God's deeper nature in a comparative level,²⁸ Luther understands that they are balanced. Besides, the balance is well represented in the metaphor of God's face and back to describe God's love as "show My face" and God's wrath as "show My back,"²⁹ in the sense that God's face and back imply that love and wrath are different aspects of one and the same God. For Luther, law and gospel, wrath and love, the *opus alienum* and the *opus proprium* do not indicate "disunity in Divine nature", though the eye of nature would find a serious tension between them. These are twofold symmetrical aspects of God like his back and face. Like Luther, Calvin maintains the view that God's deeper nature is much closer to love. As Luther calls God's wrath "the forced nature,"³⁰ Calvin understands that God's "severity towards men" as the judge of the world does not come "from the heart" "because he wishes all to be innocent."³¹ Like Luther, Calvin understands that God's love and wrath are in a symmetrical harmony. God's love and wrath do not mean the division of the will of God. God's love and wrath reflect two different sides of the single reality of God's merciful grace and justice.

The core question about Luther's hidden God is "How is the relation between God hidden and revealed in terms of unity?" Is it identical or antithetical? So far, we have seen

²⁷ *Inst.* III.xxi.1.

²⁸ For this argument, see the above Chapter V.4. "God's Love and Wrath in God Hidden and Revealed".

²⁹ *LW* 10.126 (Psalm 27:9)

³⁰ "Wrath is truly God's alien work, which he employs contrary to his nature, because he is *forced* into it by the wickedness of man." *WA* 42.356. = *LW* 2.134. (Gen 9:2)

³¹ *Comm. on Lam.* 3:311-3; Cf. *Comm. on Isa.* 1:21.

so much tumultuous disagreement on this matter. Some find unity, and some find contradiction, some even warn of the danger to theology of seeing the serious conflict between God hidden and revealed. It is significant to consider the duality of Hiddenness I and Hiddenness II. In Hiddenness I, the hidden God is none other than the revealed God. The same God reveals himself to the believers, but hidden to the unbelievers, and thus becomes the revealed God to the believers, but stays a hidden God to the unbelievers. In the single event of revelation, the eye of faith discerns the hidden God in the masks and thus the hidden God becomes the revealed God, while reason cannot discern the hidden God in the masks and thus the hidden God remains the hidden God. The difference lies in our ability to see. Therefore, we have come to the conclusion that in Hiddenness I, the revealed God and the hidden God are identical. In Hiddenness II, Luther introduces a serious tension between God hidden and revealed. Luther thinks of the antithetically juxtaposed structure between God hidden and revealed to explain theological perplexities in the Bible. Luther's contradiction between God hidden and revealed is deep, serious, and straight-forward, as we see in his statement that it is the part of this incarnate God to weep, wail, and groan over the perdition of the ungodly, when the will of the Divine Majesty purposely abandons and reprobates some to perish,³² and that God does not will the death of sinner in his Word—but he does it by that inscrutable will.³³ Here Luther's paradox comes to its climax, "a striking antithetical juxtaposition". Luther raised all kinds of sharp theological predicaments into God's contradiction where the juxtaposed wills of God hidden and revealed are sharply contrasted. Our reason judges that this is not a paradox, but a sure contradiction. The contradiction is so serious as to leave little room to be harmonized or reconciled in our reason.

Luther's key to harmonize God's contradiction and unity is God's *Divine paradox*.

³² LW 33.146. (*Bondage of the Will*)

³³ LW 33.140. (*Bondage of the Will*)

Luther throws this juxtaposed contradiction into the *Divine paradox*, where he dissolves God's apparent contradiction to find God's unity through the light of glory. However, we will enjoy the light of glory when we enter the world of glory. Luther's *Divine paradox* can be understood only in terms of the distinction between our sight and God's sight. All contradictions are due to our limited eyesight, but there is no contradiction in the sight of God. Even faith cannot comprehend, but just believe God's unity in contradiction. Only the light of glory can understand the unity hidden in apparent contradiction. Therefore, the entangled knot of God hidden and revealed can be summed up in terms of "contradiction to human eye, but unity in the eye of God".

In contrast to Luther, Calvin gives more of a systematic resolution to many seemingly contradictory expressions. While Luther ascribes theological puzzle to the mystery of God which can be understood only in the light of glory, Calvin is very pertinacious and judicious in shattering contradictions in God. While Luther chiefly adheres to the light of glory characterized by the *Divine paradox* as the way to solve the apparent contradiction between God hidden and revealed, Calvin struggles with all three kinds of lights of nature, faith, and glory in order to shatter all misconceived contradiction between God hidden and revealed. Calvin's basic attitude toward God's apparent contradiction is well expressed with the resolute and aggressive words of "*the childish folly*",³⁴ "it is *absurd*..."³⁵ "Nothing will be *ambiguous*..."³⁶ "For *what is more absurd*..."³⁷ While Luther drives the contradictory puzzles in theology to the juxtaposed tension between God hidden and revealed, Calvin pursues the harmony between God's hidden will and revealed will through *reconciliation* between them, saying, "I have elsewhere explained how Scripture *reconciles* the two notions that all are called to repentance and faith by outward preaching,

³⁴ *Comm. on I Tim.* 2:4.

³⁵ *Comm. on Zep.* 3:6, 7; *Comm. on Matt.* 23:37

³⁶ *Inst.* III.xxiv.8.

³⁷ *Comm. on Zep.* 3:6, 7.

yet the spirit of repentance and faith is not given to all.”³⁸ Calvin harmonizes universal calling and special election by appealing to different dimensions like the distinctive acts of “God’s stretching out his hands” and “God taking hold of the elect” (dimensional differentiation). When the Bible says that God stretches out his hands to *all*, this *all* do not means “persons” but “classes” or “ranks” (clarification of terms). Calvin resorts to his view of God—i.e. God cannot war against God himself. He threw the contrary theological puzzles into the large melting pot of his comprehensive efforts to shatter all apparent contradiction, where this double will turns out to be “one and simple will in manifold appearance.” His battle is mainly against ‘capricious God *ex lex in potentia absoluta*’; against ‘God with two different wills’; against ‘God who changes his will’; against ‘God as the author of the evil’; against ‘God as an unjust and unreliable judge’, as we argued in detail. For this fight, sometimes he resorts not only to an exegetical solution such as his *clarification of terms*,³⁹ but also to numerous logical and systematic solution such as double justice, the concept of accommodation, continuity in discontinuity, or dimensional difference, gradation of revelation, analogies, and metaphors. Sometimes Calvin appeals to his theological understanding of God and his providence, such as God’s will as the supreme standard of justice, the inseparableness of God’s attributes, and the proposition that God cannot war against himself. All of these are very refined and elaborate theological methods. In this context, we should reconsider Dewey’s comments that “he (Calvin) never conceived of his theological task as an effort to harmonize the deeper paradoxes of Scripture or to explain what he regarded as its central mysteries.”⁴⁰ It is clear that Calvin shows more efforts to prove God’s unity in contradiction in a comprehensive way—not only in an exegetical, but also in a logical and systematic way.

³⁸ *Inst.* III.xxii.10.

³⁹ *Comm. on Isa.* 45:7.

⁴⁰ Dewey, *The Knowledge of God in Calvin’s Theology*, 40.

From this comparison, we can affirm that Luther has a deeper sense of paradox than Calvin. Luther's contradiction is a sheer contradiction where our reason cannot find any compromising or harmonizing points. Much more so than Calvin, Luther describes so sheer and serious a contradiction between God hidden and revealed as to threaten the unity of God hidden and revealed. Luther strives to embrace those contradictions in God's *Divine paradox*. We might say that while Luther prefers to keep the self-contradictory aspects vivid like *a salad bowl*, Calvin shatters and melted away all contradiction in his *melting pot*. In Calvin, the apparent contradiction in God hidden and revealed leaves more room to compromise than in Luther.

Their common spirit which should be emphasised is their adherence to the Christological ground for the unity of God, in spite of their similar insight about apparent contradictions. On the Christological ground, Luther tries to keep God's unity. In *Heidelberg Theses* (1518), we find the well-known programmatic sentence: "In the crucified Christ is true theology and recognition of God."⁴¹ In the *Large Catechism* (1529), Luther called Christ "a mirror of Father's heart".⁴² In Psalm 82, Christ is "the mirror of God's fatherly heart, in whom God himself appears to us."⁴³ Furthermore, Luther understands that the hidden God and the revealed God have an inseparable relation.⁴⁴ Late in his life, Luther emphasises God's unity especially in his *Lectures on Genesis*: "Whosoever loses Christ, who is the revealed God, also loses the hidden God who is not revealed";⁴⁵ "From an unrevealed God, I will become a revealed God. Nevertheless, I will remain the same God."⁴⁶ Therefore, the mediation of Christ is essential in our approaching

⁴¹ LW 31.53. (Heidelberg Disputation)

⁴² *Luther's Primary Works*, 106. (The Large Catechism: Creed) Besides, in his *Lectures on John* 14:20, Luther declares, "In Christ I have the Father's will and heart." LW 24.141. (John 14:20)

⁴³ WA 31¹.192. (Psalm 82, 1530)

⁴⁴ WA 43.460.26ff. = LW 5.46ff. (Gen 26:9)

⁴⁵ LW 5.46. (Gen 26:9, 1539)

⁴⁶ Ibid.

the naked God.⁴⁷ Luther regards Christ alone as “the means, the life, and the mirror through which we see God and know His will.”⁴⁸ Christ’s humanity is “the holy ladder” (*scala sancta*) to his Divinity, the hidden God. He is the lowest step from which we can climb into heaven, that is, to the knowledge of God himself.⁴⁹ Luther declares that “begin from below, from the incarnate Son...Christ will bring you to the hidden God...If you take the revealed God, he will bring you to the hidden God at the same time.”⁵⁰ All ascents to know God are dangerous except the one through Christ. Like Luther, Calvin calls Christ a mirror to reflect God: “God in himself, that is, in his naked majesty, is invisible, and that not to the eyes of the body only, but also to the minds of men, and that he is revealed to us in Christ alone, that we may behold him as a mirror.”⁵¹ Like Luther, Calvin insists that without the passage of Christ, there is no way to God in heaven. Christ is the only way to God. “That man is ignorant of Christ who is not led by Him to the Father and who does not in Him embrace God wholly.”⁵² Both understand that the revealed Christ is the only way to keep oneself from terrifying darkness and an abyss of sightless darkness. Both are sure that only Christ can penetrate into the dark cloud of Hiddenness II and let us see the deep secret of an eternal Divine decree of our election. Therefore, their common maxim could be “Just look to the revealed God, then you are grasping the hidden God of predestination.”

At the same time, both recognize that God’s unity in apparent contradiction belongs to God’s mystery. Both humbly kneel down and adore God’s mystery where all the knots of God’s contradiction are anchored. Especially, Calvin, who showed pertinacious efforts to shatter all apparent contradictions surrounding God hidden and revealed, does not forget

⁴⁷ *WA* 20.778.1-3. (Lectures on 1. John 5:6) Cf. *LW* 30.315. (Lectures on 1. John 5:6)

⁴⁸ *LW* 26.396. (Gal 4:8, 9)

⁴⁹ *WA* 10^{1,2}.297. “Scripture begins very gently by leading us first to Christ as to a man and afterwards to the Lord of all creation and finally to know God...One must begin at the bottom and afterward right up.” Cf. Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, 186-7.

⁵⁰ *WA* TR 5, no. 5658a: 294.24.34; 295.5; 294.4, quoted in Gerrish “To the Unknown God: Luther and Calvin on the Hiddenness of God”, 140.

⁵¹ *Comm. on Col.* 1:15.

⁵² *Comm. on 1 Cor.* 2:2.

his humble reverence to some mystery which still remains in a deeper level. For him, God's mystery transcends human theological efforts.⁵³ It cannot be deciphered until we "fathom the deep abyss of secret election."⁵⁴ Thus he confesses that "...we cannot certainly judge how God wishes all to be saved, and yet has devoted all the reprobate to eternal destruction, and wishes them to perish."⁵⁵

What is distinctive in Calvin is that he, more than Luther, emphasises Christ's participation in the Father's secret decree of predestination as the second Person of the Holy Trinity who became the author of election: "Meanwhile, although Christ interposes himself as mediator, he claims for himself, in common with the Father, the right to choose";⁵⁶ Christ "has chosen and set apart the Church as his bride."⁵⁷ Christ is not only the medium of election, but also the author of election like God, the Father. People are elected not only *after* the pattern of Christ, and *in* Christ, but also *by* Christ. Christ "claims the right of choose in common with the Father" and "makes himself the author of election."⁵⁸ The Christ who shared the secret counsel with the hidden Father in heaven

⁵³ Calvin admits and kneels before some mysteries of God in reverence. Above all, the ultimate puzzle such as "why does God choose those, not the others? Why did he create the person who is predestined to destruction?" lapsed into the ultimate hidden mystery. Further, the way that God as the author of all uses evil for his good while he remains innocent and thus makes good out of evil with his omnipotence remains unsolved as a deep mystery which cannot be comprehended until the last day. In *Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God*, 124, Calvin confess that "but how it was ordained by the foreknowledge and decree of God what man's future was without God being implicated as associate in the fault as the author or approver of transgression, is clearly a secret so much excelling the insight of the human mind, that I am not ashamed to confess ignorance." Calvin recognizes God's inscrutable way, because God always "wishes the same thing, though by different ways, and in a manner *inscrutable* to us"(CR 40:445-446). God's will is another significant mystery. God's will is simple, but great variety involved in it makes it impossible for us to penetrate the simple reality beyond the diverse appearance, because of our limited perception. We cannot but see various forms instead of penetrating into its one reality.

⁵⁴ *Comm. on Matt.* 23:37.

⁵⁵ CR 40:445-446. (Epistle, 17 December, 1546 *Calvinus Vireto*)

⁵⁶ *Inst.* III.xxii.7.

⁵⁷ *Inst.* IV.i.10.

⁵⁸ *Inst.* III.xxiv.5; III.xxii.vii.

will be a sure proof of the unity between God hidden and revealed.

As for the movement of people in the hidden God, Luther urges people to flee from the naked God, "From this absolute God everyone should flee who does not want to perish."⁵⁹ However, Calvin does not ask us to flee from the naked God. In Luther, there are movements in two directions: one direction by faith from the naked God to the revealed God and the other direction by the effect of faith from the revealed God to the naked God.⁶⁰ However, in Calvin, there is more emphasis on the direction from the revealed God to the naked God or God himself by faith and from the angry God to the same angry God for his mercy.

We can find some contrasting response about the experience of the hidden God. While Luther feels an extreme conflict between the hidden God and the revealed God by saying, "God by his own sheer will should abandon, harden, and damn men as if he enjoyed the sins and the vast, eternal torments of his wretched creatures, when he is preached as a God of such great mercy and goodness, etc."⁶¹ Calvin does not feel so strong a conflict between God hidden and revealed as to raise such a dubious question as to drive faith shaken. Luther's shivering experience of the hidden God drive him into intense agony as to confess, "Who would not be offended? I myself was offended more than once, and brought to the very depth and abyss of despair, so that I wish I had never been created a man...."⁶² However, Calvin does not fall into such strong paralyzing despair, though he confesses the doctrine of double predestination as a "dreadful decree".

Luther and Calvin arrive at the same conclusion of "God's unity in apparent contradiction". They agree that God's contradiction between God hidden and revealed is only in our limited perception. As Calvin concludes, God's will is one and simple in spite

⁵⁹ LW 12.312. (Psalm 51:1)

⁶⁰ See the above Part C, "Conclusion of Part C: Comparison of the Relation between God Hidden and Revealed in Luther and Calvin".

⁶¹ LW 33.190. (*Bondage of the Will*)

of its diverse appearance to our perception: “But even though his will is one and simple in him, it appears manifold to us because, on account of our mental incapacity, we do not grasp how in diverse ways it wills and does not will the very same thing.”⁶³ Their common conclusion is that God’s will may appear to human beings to be two wills of God, but in reality they are not. The duality of the Divine will is an epistemological issue, not ontological existence.

In the knowledge of God hidden and revealed, Luther and Calvin agree that there is complete darkness which even faith and the illumination of the Holy Spirit cannot penetrate. They shudder at the depth of predestination as Augustine said, “ ‘Oh the depth!’ Do you ask the reason? I shudder at the depth.”⁶⁴ Luther and Calvin reject human efforts to comprehend naked Divinity or the naked Divine essence. To both of them, nothing is more dangerous than to stray into heaven with our idle speculation, there to investigate God in His incomprehensible power, wisdom, and majesty. To borrow Luther’s expression, the right way to find God hidden “under the mask” is “through the mask”, because the mask is the best instrument to see God. It is like we can see *the sun better through a cloud*. Calvin shows the similar idea. He understands that the best way to see God is “to see *through oblique light* ” that is, to see God “*through his coverings or veils*”, which God puts on for the forms adapted to our capacity, thus softening the dazzling majesty of God.

To put it briefly, Luther and Calvin drew a very similar picture of God. In a comparative level, Luther puts more emphasis on the paradox of God hidden and revealed than Calvin. I agree with B. A. Gerrish’s evaluation that “perhaps he [Calvin] went further than Luther toward a resolution of the theoretical problem of the ‘two wills’”, considering

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ *Inst.* I.xviii.3.

⁶⁴ Quoted in *Inst.* III.xxiii.5.

Calvin's untiring theological efforts to shatter contradictory elements.⁶⁵ Luther lacked Calvin's strenuous theological efforts to shatter the contradictions of God, just embracing all the contradiction in God as it is, while Calvin lacked Luther's sharp juxtaposition between God hidden and revealed, striving more to prove the unity in the apparent contradiction. While Luther is happier to live with ideas in a paradoxical tension, shrouding the apparent contradiction in the mystery of God beyond our perception, which can be understood only in the light of glory, Calvin intends to give more systematic resolution and get over the apparent contradiction on the firm basis of the unity of God. His efforts are mainly concentrated on shattering the idea of all contradictory elements such as two different wills, in his melting pot of diverse theological efforts to appeal to the light of nature (reason), the light of gospel (faith), and finally the light of glory (mystery). While Luther is faithful to his theological insight and draws the God hidden and revealed as he is, Calvin is more enthusiastic in refining the crude and splitting aspects in God hidden and revealed through systematization with the logical frame of his systematic theory, based on his understanding of God and his providence. Therefore, it follows that the tension between the hidden and the revealed God is stronger in Luther than in Calvin. However, Luther and Calvin both affirm that, though the hidden God and the revealed God seem to be irreconcilable from the perspective of our limited reason, this is not so in God's sight. They came to the same conclusion that *there is no contradiction in God. All contradictions are just apparent, due to our limited perception.* To both of them, God looks wrathful, unjust, and inconsistent to our sight sometimes like ruthless judge, sometimes like an arbitrary or capricious despot, sometimes like an enemy,⁶⁶ even sometimes like a devil, but they do not lose the conviction that God is just and merciful and trustworthy to his promise. They emphasise that, though the hidden God and the revealed God seem to be

⁶⁵ Gerrish, "To the unknown God: Luther and Calvin on the Hiddenness of God", 144-5.

⁶⁶ As for Calvin's image of the enemy, see Jane Dempsey Douglass, "Calvin's Use of Metaphorical Language for God: God as Enemy and God as Mother" in *Princeton Seminary Bulletin* 8 (1987): 19-32.

separate to our limited reason, they are in full harmony in God's sight. Both understand that the hidden God of predestination is none other than the God revealed in Christ, approaching us with love and mercy. Both stand on the firm ground of Christological unity. Both insist that the best way to the hidden God of predestination is to grab the revealed God in Christ. Both accepted with humility that the mystery of God must be the final source of understanding of God hidden and revealed. Both used their doctrine of the hidden God as a vehicle to praise the greatness of God.

Finally, I assert that despite the comparative scarcity of scholars' study on Calvin's hiddenness, Calvin's doctrine of hiddenness shares much with Luther's in its large area. Both keep their own characteristic color, through their distinctive theological method or emphasis. While Luther is more a genius of great theological imagination and intuition, who perceives some crude form of God's truth, and describes them in a candid, straightforward, daring, and decisive manner, rather than show any refining and compromising efforts, Calvin is more prudent and more concentrated in refining and systematizing the Biblical truths. He shatters all outward forms of contradiction to reveal the inner unity hidden under the veil of contradiction. I agree with T. F. Torrance's comparison of these two theological giants: "Yet Calvin was often more judicious and legalistic in his approach, whereas Luther was more uninhibited and more human, and not infrequently rather extravagant."⁶⁷

B. Evaluation

1. Not at the Periphery, but a Sound and Substantial Theology

Luther and Calvin's doctrine of the hidden God helps us to escape any misconception that a doctrine of God's hiddenness belongs to the periphery of theology like a pendent; or perhaps worse, some dubious and cynical suspicion that it will undermine sound and positive theology with some morbid, gloomy shadow of all negativity, thus making it aberrant. As we go deeper into Luther and Calvin's hiddenness of God, we realize that the idea of hiddenness should be understood as sound and substantial theology which makes our faith strong and healthy. David Tracy evaluates that "Luther's extraordinary religious and theological insight into God's revelation through the hiddenness of the Cross is central to all his thought."⁶⁸ Further, the positive aspects of Luther's doctrine of the hidden God are well represented in Paul Althaus's explanation of why theology should speak of the hidden God.

Luther's assertion that theology must speak also of the hidden God is based not only on the fact that God wants this. He also tries to show that this is necessary and good for us Christians. As we have already seen, Luther here once again repeats the thought always so important to him—that the hiddenness of God's grace under the terrible reality of rejection creates room for faith and for its character as a risky 'nevertheless'.⁶⁹

Althaus indicates three significant points: (1) God wants this. (2) This is necessary and good for us Christians. (3) The hiddenness of God's grace under the terrible reality of

⁶⁷ Thomas F. Torrance, *The Hermeneutics of John Calvin* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1988), 159.

⁶⁸ Tracy, "The Hidden God: The Divine Other of Liberation", 9.

⁶⁹ Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, 283.

rejection creates “room for faith”. We find that Luther’s writings support these points. Especially, these points are well described and supported in Luther’s *The Bondage of the Will*. First of all, here we find that “God wants this” as Althaus points out, seeing that “God has *willed* them (hidden will) to be published and we must not ask the reason for the Divine will, but simply adore it, giving God glory that, since he alone is just and wise, he does no wrong to anyone and can do nothing foolishly or rashly, though it may seem far otherwise to us.”⁷⁰ Here, the word, “*willed*” clearly shows that God wants this. As the second point, we find in Luther that this is necessary and good for us, as Althaus indicates. Above all, Luther’s doctrine of the hidden God has to do with soteriology. Here the main point is that the knowledge of the hidden God makes us humble because “no one can be thoroughly humbled until he knows that his salvation is utterly beyond his own powers, devices, endeavors, will, and works, and depends entirely on the choice, will, and work of another, namely, of God alone.”⁷¹ Therefore, the doctrine of the hidden God makes us humble and makes us closer to the grace of God, because “everything depends on the hidden will of God, then he completely despairs of himself and chooses nothing for himself, but waits for God to work.”⁷² The third point which Althaus indicated deals with the hidden God and faith. Luther asserts that God and his working way in the world should be hidden so that “there may be room for faith” because “faith has to do with things not seen” (Heb. 11.1).⁷³ If God disclosed all things, our faith would lose its standing ground. Because God is hidden in veil, our faith is required to understand God’s revelation. Further, Luther’s God’s hiddenness not only makes room for faith, but also strengthens it. Contrary to our expectation that the hidden God would shake the ground of our faith, in fact, our faith becomes more refined and stronger when it passes through that darkest tunnel of the

⁷⁰ LW 33.61. (*Bondage of the Will*)

⁷¹ LW 33.62. (*Bondage of the Will*)

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

hidden God as its test and tonic. We come to depend on the revealed God, as the hidden God terrifies and threatens us. Luther's hidden God cleanses our faith like a refiner's fire because the idea of the hidden God rids the Christians' faith of all stains of dregs, including all secret claims and all self-righteousness. The hidden God is a good soil for faith to grow and bloom.

Calvin, too, describes the positive aspect of the doctrine of the hidden God, especially the significance of the doctrine of predestination: "For it builds up faith soundly, trains us to humility, elevates us to admiration of the immense goodness of God towards us, and excites us to praise the goodness."⁷⁴ Here Calvin indicates three points on the positive aspects of the doctrine of predestination. First, it builds up faith soundly. It is the most suitable means to build up our faith. It lets us get a clear view of the steadfastness of our salvation. It strengthens our faith by lifting our eyes to the merciful kindness of the sovereign God. Second, it trains us to humility. When we understand that salvation lies completely in the hand of the predestinating God, we come to realize that there is left nothing for us to take a pride in. We are helpless for our salvation without God's grace. When we see that all of us are blind, we realize that we have received, unmerited, the gift of faith and illumination. When we know ourselves to be illuminated in the midst of this darkness, we ask how it happens that others in the midst of clear light remain blind, unless there be a gift not indifferently bestowed upon all.⁷⁵ Third, it elevates us to admiration of the immense goodness of God towards us, and excites us to praise this goodness, because when we pass through the depth of humility, we are ready to get rid of what is ours, rejoicing in the infinite mercy and grace of God, and praising the glory due to him.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ *Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God*, 56.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 57.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

2. Positive through Negative

Is Luther's Hidden God theologically positive or negative? Here, the words, positive and negative, have two meanings. First, they can refer to the theological way to define God. In this case, "positive" indicates the way to define "what God is", and "negative" indicates the way to define "what God is not". In a traditional perspective, we will presuppose that the concept of the hidden God is in the area of negative theology, since the word, "hidden" itself connotes something we cannot express in a positive way.

Whereas negative theology asks us to talk about *what God is not* because we cannot know what God is, Luther speaks of a third way. In his *Lectures on Genesis*, Luther understands that the true way to the hidden God is not a direct positive statement to try to define what God is in his majesty as some fanatics do. Luther admits we can define what God is not, through the negative way. However, as the more effective way, he suggests the third way to grasp—to recognize and understand God through visible forms, voice, actions, emotions of human beings which God presented us to reveal himself.⁷⁷ God in his majesty, who is unknowable and impossible to define or put into words what He is, presented these visible signs and has revealed himself through them.⁷⁸ In a sense, Luther was an apophatic (negative) theologian of a different sort, who not only recognizes the limits of human reason, analogy, or the natural knowledge of God, but also understands that God chooses the negative way of hiding in order to make cataphatic revelation in a new way. For Luther, the true negation in the hidden God theory can be found in the negative way God works in the world—God wants to reveal himself in the negativity—the Cross and suffering. On this basis, Luther's theological method in his theory of the hidden God can be summarized as "through the negative to the positive". Luther neither disregards nor attempts to absorb all

⁷⁷ LW 2.45-6. (Gen 6:5, 6)

⁷⁸ Ibid. This way refers to the way of "through the mask" mentioned in this paper.

the negativity into the finally triumphant positive. The negative is not annulled by an overwhelming positive. Instead, for Luther, the great principle of the doctrine of the hidden God is that all positive things are hidden under the negativity. Luther's main concern is to reach the positive hidden reality concealed under the negative. The God he envisages is the God hidden under the negativity. The positive, revealed God is hidden in the seemingly negative God, the hidden God. Therefore, Luther expresses God as "a negative essence and goodness and wisdom and righteousness, who cannot be possessed or touched except by negation of all our affirmatives."⁷⁹ A God of love is hidden under the disguise of a God of wrath and severity. God likes to appear in the negative masks such as the Cross and suffering, which is the only way we can reach the glory of God. God is full of paradox seemingly contradictory to our sight. This understanding of the paradox of God naturally flows into his world vision. The Cross as the ultimate point of all negativity is the most secret hiding place in that the Cross is our most precious treasure: "All good things are hidden in and under the Cross" (*Omnia bona in cruce et sub cruce abscondita sunt*).⁸⁰ That is, all the positive things are hidden under the negativity. And "universally our every assertion of anything good is hidden under the denial of it."⁸¹ All positive things can be reached through the negative way. This is Luther's vision of God and the world—piercing through the negative mask into the positive reality in it: "positive through negative". This is the greatest contribution that Luther has ever made through his hidden God theory in the world of theology.

For Calvin, God's hiddenness has some positive meaning. First, God hides so that we may see God more clearly. We can see stars more clearly in the night while we cannot see them in daylight. Likewise, when God hides his face and covers us with darkness, we can

⁷⁹ LW 25.383. (Rom 9:3, 1516)

⁸⁰ Regin Prenter, *Luther's Theology of the Cross*, vi.

⁸¹ LW 25.383. (Rom 9:3, 1516)

see God more clearly: "...a marvelous and incredible way of doing things, surely, that God, by hiding his face and, as it were, covering us with darkness, should illumine the eyes of his servant—eyes which saw nothing at all in the full light of day."⁸² In addition, God's hiddenness sometimes makes his people repent. God hides himself out of anger to bring his people to repentance. He conceals his help for a time until he sees that we have sufficiently humbled ourselves before him. At that time he will clearly manifest his help.⁸³ Above all, God's hiddenness contributes to making us rely on God.⁸⁴ In his *Commentary on Psalms* 9, God seems to be silent as if he does not care for our oppression, when he wants us to pray to him. In the *Institutes*, Calvin comments that the wrath of the hidden God with terrible destruction and eternal death has the useful effect to lead us to "seize upon life ardently enough or accept it with gratefulness we owe" and "to embrace his benevolence and fatherly love in Christ alone".⁸⁵ As in Luther, for Calvin, all positive things are hidden under the negative. The treasures lie hidden under the contemptible abasement and simplicity of the Cross.⁸⁶ Immortal God is hidden under the veil of mortal flesh, God's righteousness under the appearance of sin, life under death, and blessings under the curse.⁸⁷ Like Luther, for Calvin, the negative is the sure passage to the positive. Only when we get through the negative of tribulations of the Cross, we can get to the positive reality of "celestial glory".

Hence also in harsh and difficult conditions, regarded as adverse and evil, a great comfort comes to us: we share Christ's sufferings in order that as he has passed from a labyrinth of all evils into heavenly glory, we may in like manner be led through various tribulations to the same glory [Acts 14:22].⁸⁸

⁸² *Comm. on Ps.* 30:8.

⁸³ *Comm. on Ps.* 18:15.

⁸⁴ *Comm. on Ps.* 9:13.

⁸⁵ *Inst.* II.xvi.2.

⁸⁶ *Comm. on Col.* 2:3.

⁸⁷ *Cf. Comm. on 1Cor.* 1:21.

⁸⁸ *Inst.* III.viii.1.

3. Theology Extolling the Greatness of God

Luther evaluates that the doctrine of the hidden God exalts “the greatness of God”. In his explanation of the passage he cites as the Biblical foundation of his distinction between God preached and not preached, he suggests the significance of the doctrine of the hidden God in this perspective:

Lest any should think that this distinction is my own, I am following Paul, who writes to the Thessalonians of Antichrist that ‘he should exalt himself above all that is God preached and worshipped’ [II Thess. 2:4]; clearly intimating that a man can be exalted above God as He is preached and worshipped, that is, above the word and worship of God, by which He is known to us and has dealings with us. *But above God not worshipped and not preached, that is, God as He is in His own nature and Majesty, nothing can be exalted, but all things are under His powerful hand.*⁸⁹

The last italicized section is Luther’s pure interpretation which clearly discloses his idea on the theological significance of the hidden God: “the greatness of God”. I evaluate that Luther’s idea that “*nothing can be exalted* (above the hidden God in His own nature and Majesty)”, is the main drive which led Luther to develop his idea on the hidden God. The hidden God is a God of greatness, a God of freedom. He cannot be restricted within the limits of our reason or our judgement. Even the Word cannot contain or limit the great God. God is greater than his Word: “For there he has not bound himself by his Word, but has kept himself free over all things.”⁹⁰ The great God overflows the pail of the Word. He cannot be restricted within the frame of human value and principle. Our positively oriented concept of God may put God in the frame of a bright, mellow, candy-like God who has no

⁸⁹ LW 33.139. (*Bondage of the Will*) [Italics mine]

⁹⁰ LW 33.140. (*Bondage of the Will*)

relation with our dark and gloomy reality. However, the hidden God creates not only blessing but also evil. He makes not only life but also death. He “works life, death, and all in all.” In a word, he is the Lord of all creation, the great God. In a large spectacle, it is no exaggeration to say that Luther’s entire theology focussed on exalting God and thus making man humble. For Luther, if God is fully understood and grasped in our reason or even in our faith, the God cannot be God any more. As Althaus indicates, in case we have only the picture of the “preached God” and all-inclusive will to save, there is some danger that human reason could *control* God.⁹¹ God is not the object of our control. The doctrine of the hidden God attacks this possibility. It proclaims that God is too great to be contained within the bottle of human reason. We cannot and should not control God. It is quite right that, as David Tracy indicates, to let that awesome and numinous God of Hiddenness II be heard is to let God be God, in Luther’s most famous cry.⁹²

Calvin, too, confesses that God’s predestination makes him greater.⁹³ “See then how God would yet give greater glory and beauty to his mercy, when he had chosen Jacob before Esau.”⁹⁴ The goal of election is God’s glory, “for the praise of his glory (Eph 1:12)” and our sanctification, “to be holy and blameless in his sight (Eph. 1:4)” According to Calvin, while our sanctification is the proximate end, the glory of God is the highest end. “The glory of God is the highest end, to which our sanctification is subordinate.”⁹⁵ In his *Commentary on Ephesians*, Calvin calls the glory of God the final cause or ultimate design of election: “The efficient cause is good pleasure of the will of God; the material cause is Christ; and *the final cause is the praise of his grace*...the formal cause the preaching of the Gospel, by which the goodness of God flows out to us.”⁹⁶ For the repeated emphasis of

⁹¹ Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, 285.

⁹² Tracy, “The Hidden God: The Divine Other of Liberation”, 13.

⁹³ *The Sermons on Election and Reprobation*, 31 = *Sermons on Gen 25:21-22*.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ *Comm. on Eph. 1:4*.

⁹⁶ *Comm. on Eph. 1:5*, 8.

God's glory as the purpose of election in Eph. 1:6 (to the praise of his glorious grace) and Eph 1:12 (for the praise of his glory), Calvin mentions, "He repeats the purpose. For only then does God's glory shine in us, if we are nothing but vessels of His mercy. The word glory denotes...peculiarly that which shines in the goodness of God; for there is nothing more His own, in which He desires to be glorified, than His goodness."⁹⁷ The principle of election praises God's mercy and generosity.⁹⁸ When we contemplate Divine predestination, there is no choice but to look at the mercy of God: "we shall never be clearly persuaded, as we ought to be, that our salvation flows from the wellspring of God's free mercy until we come to know his eternal election, which illumines God's grace by this contrast: that he does not indiscriminately adopt all into the hope of salvation but gives to some what he denies to others."⁹⁹ At the same time, the contemplation of this doctrine makes us humble as we ought to be and feel how much we are obliged to God. Therefore, "ignorance of this principle detracts from God's glory" and "takes away from true humility."¹⁰⁰ The goodness he displays towards us proceeds from his having elected us before the creation of the world.¹⁰¹

4. Theology of Eschatological Hope

Luther's hidden God theory is imbued with an eschatological color. For Luther, God is a hidden God, and our faith is the evidence of the thing not seen (Heb. 11.1). Therefore Christian life should be hidden, for the Christian life is the life of faith. For this hidden aspect, Luther cites Col. 3:3: "Your life is hid with Christ in God."¹⁰² The Christian life

⁹⁷ *Comm. on Eph.* 1:12.

⁹⁸ *Inst.* III.xxi.1.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ *Tracts and Treatises*, vol II, 142. (Of the Source of Our Salvation)

¹⁰² *LW* 6.147. (Gen 32:31, 32)

does not correspond with that of experience. The most obvious paradox is the contrast between the outward appearance of the Church and its inner reality. The people of God appear weak, poverty stricken, and despicable. Luther describes this kind of hidden life of believers as follows: “For we are not praised, honored, or joyful in the flesh, but we are mortified, we die, suffer, and are perplexed, loaded with insults, spit upon and regarded as the worst of all men, if they could, they would remove as heretics and criminals with fire and sword.”¹⁰³ In this way, God hides the Church under “a dark and horrible cover”.¹⁰⁴ However, their life to “believe in the Son of God” is “a beautiful and precious gem” which lies hidden.¹⁰⁵ They possess the true riches of God by faith in his promise. There is a great paradoxical tension between them. In a word, God’s “yes” to us is hidden in his severe “no”.¹⁰⁶ All positive things in the Christian life are hidden under the negative things.¹⁰⁷ “What is good for us is hidden, and that so deeply that it is hidden under is opposite.”¹⁰⁸ “Universally our every assertion of anything good is hidden under the denial of it.”¹⁰⁹ Therefore, the spiritual person lives a dual life. Though the humble, derisive outward appearance belies its inner glory, though the present poverty obscures its spiritual treasure, the hidden life will be revealed at last, and the tension between them will relax. Now they live suffering in the world like a traveler, but on the last day, their hidden life will be revealed and all that is not punished and repaid will be punished and repaid there.¹¹⁰

In Luther’s doctrine of the hidden God, Christ crucified is the Christ of resurrection and victory. In suffering, he shows his strength and wisdom. In the crucified but resurrected Christ, we find our salvation, our life, our resurrection, victory, and glory,

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ LW. 6.146. (Gen 32:31,32)

¹⁰⁵ LW. 6.147. (Gen 32:31, 32)

¹⁰⁶ See Althaus, *Theology of Luther*, 32.

¹⁰⁷ LW 4.343-4. (Gen 25:21)

¹⁰⁸ LW 25.382 (Rom 9:3)

¹⁰⁹ LW. 25.383. (Rom 9:3)

¹¹⁰ LW 233.291-2. (*Bondage of the Will*)

through whom we are saved and freed. He comforts them with a hope that evil will pass, and good things will come.¹¹¹ Forde indicates that the hope of resurrection pervades the whole *Heidelberg Disputation* as its presupposition: “The presupposition of the entire Disputation is laid bare. It is *the hope of resurrection*. God brings life out of death. He calls into being that which is from that which is not. In order that there be a resurrection, the sinner must die.”¹¹²

Luther interprets death in terms of eschatological hope. Even death is our blessing, not defeat. It is because death means the end of the whole tragedy of this world and sins and vices, and the beginning of the heavenly comfort and rest and a prelude of the pure, clear, glorified life of resurrection.

But Christians have...the very greatest future blessings certainly awaiting them; yet only through death and suffering. But beside this, they have the two greatest future blessings in their death. The first, in that through death and the whole tragedy of this world's ills is brought to a close...The other blessing of death is that death makes an end of sins and vices. We shall suddenly come alive out of the grave, entirely well, fresh, with a pure, clear, glorified life.¹¹³

In Calvin, it is of the essence of his whole theology that it is impossible to treat his eschatology as a separate part. Like Luther, Calvin believes that the Christian life can be understood in the eschatological light. Calvin agrees with Luther on the idea that Christian hope is hidden in the opposite semblance.

It is a being convinced of the reality of what is invisible; hence the opposite of all other kinds of persuasion which results from demonstration. What is promised to faith is properly the contradiction of all that is visible; righteousness where there is sin; eternal life in place of death; resurrection in place of extinction; blessedness where pain; fullness

¹¹¹ WA 1.168. (*The Fourteen of Consolation*); WA 1.146-7. (*The Fourteen of Consolation*)

¹¹² Gerhard O. Forde, *On Being a Theologian of the Cross*, 114.

¹¹³ WA 1.146-9. (*The Fourteen of Consolation*)

where hunger and thirst; Divine help where a helpless cry.¹¹⁴

In his *Commentary on Romans* 4:20, Calvin explains that God promises us immortality though we are surrounded by mortality and corruption; He declares us just, though we are covered with sins; God testifies that He is propitious and benevolent toward us, though outward signs threaten his wrath.¹¹⁵ In a sense, this opposite semblance is deeply related to the clear contrast between the visible and invisible. The visible life is an appearance as the invisible is the reality. “Visible life is not the ultimate reality, the latter is to be found only when we have renounced the world.”¹¹⁶ To the believers under the contradiction between our hope and the present predicament, Calvin gives some advice to overcome the contradiction with faith: “What then are we to do? We must close our eyes, disregard ourselves and all things connected with us, so that nothing may hinder or prevent us from believing that God is true.”¹¹⁷

Therefore, like Luther, Calvin insists that the Christian life is a hidden life. No one can rise again with Christ, if he has not first died with him. Christians must be dead to the world that we may live to Christ. Therefore, Calvin declares that the Christian life is buried under the ignominy of the Cross.

*...our life is said to be hid, that we may not murmur or complain if our life, being buried under the ignominy of the Cross, and under various distresses, differs nothing from death, but may patiently wait for the day of revelation.*¹¹⁸

However, even though the Christian life is hidden in the light of the world, Calvin believes that “this is the true and necessary trial of our hope, that being encompassed, as it

¹¹⁴ *Comm on Heb.* 11:1.

¹¹⁵ *Comm on Rom.* 4:20.

¹¹⁶ *Comm on Matt.* 24:40.

¹¹⁷ *Comm on Rom.* 4:20.

¹¹⁸ *Comm on Col.* 3:3-4.

were, with death, we may seek life somewhere else than in the world.”¹¹⁹ The hiddenness does not go forever. When Christ comes to the world, our hidden life will be manifested. “If our life is shut up in Christ, it must be *hid*, until he shall appear.”¹²⁰ The Christian life, though hidden, “patiently waits for the day of revelation.” Therefore, like Luther, Calvin finds a positive meaning in death. For Calvin, even death does not mean falling into tragedy. Rather, death is the time when we can “put away from us the weakness of our flesh and are taken up into perfect communion with God.”¹²¹ “Believers do not wish for death in order to lose something but in order to gain a better life.”¹²² Christian can get over fear of death by the overriding hope of Christian life. The fragile, transient, and decaying body is shattered to be transfigured into the perfect heavenly glory.¹²³ Death looks negative for our natural fear, but in fact, is positively anticipated, because, as soon as our soul is separated from the mortal and corrupt body, it begins eternal felicity. Death is the portal to consummation. More progress will go on after death. The hidden treasure of our hope will be displayed on the day of resurrection. “The day has not yet dawned which will make manifest the hidden treasures of our hope.”¹²⁴

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ *Inst.* III.vi.5.

¹²² *Comm on II Cor.* 5:4.

¹²³ *Inst.* III.ix.5.

¹²⁴ *Comm on Phil.* 1:6.

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